MUSIC CONNECTION

Annual Guide to Digital Resources

French Montana

Hey! That's My Song!
Composing for Film/TV

- Andrea Farri
- Black Pumas
- Justin Timberlake
- Jeff 'Gitty' Gitelman

Tip Jar:
Finding Your Voice In Your Music

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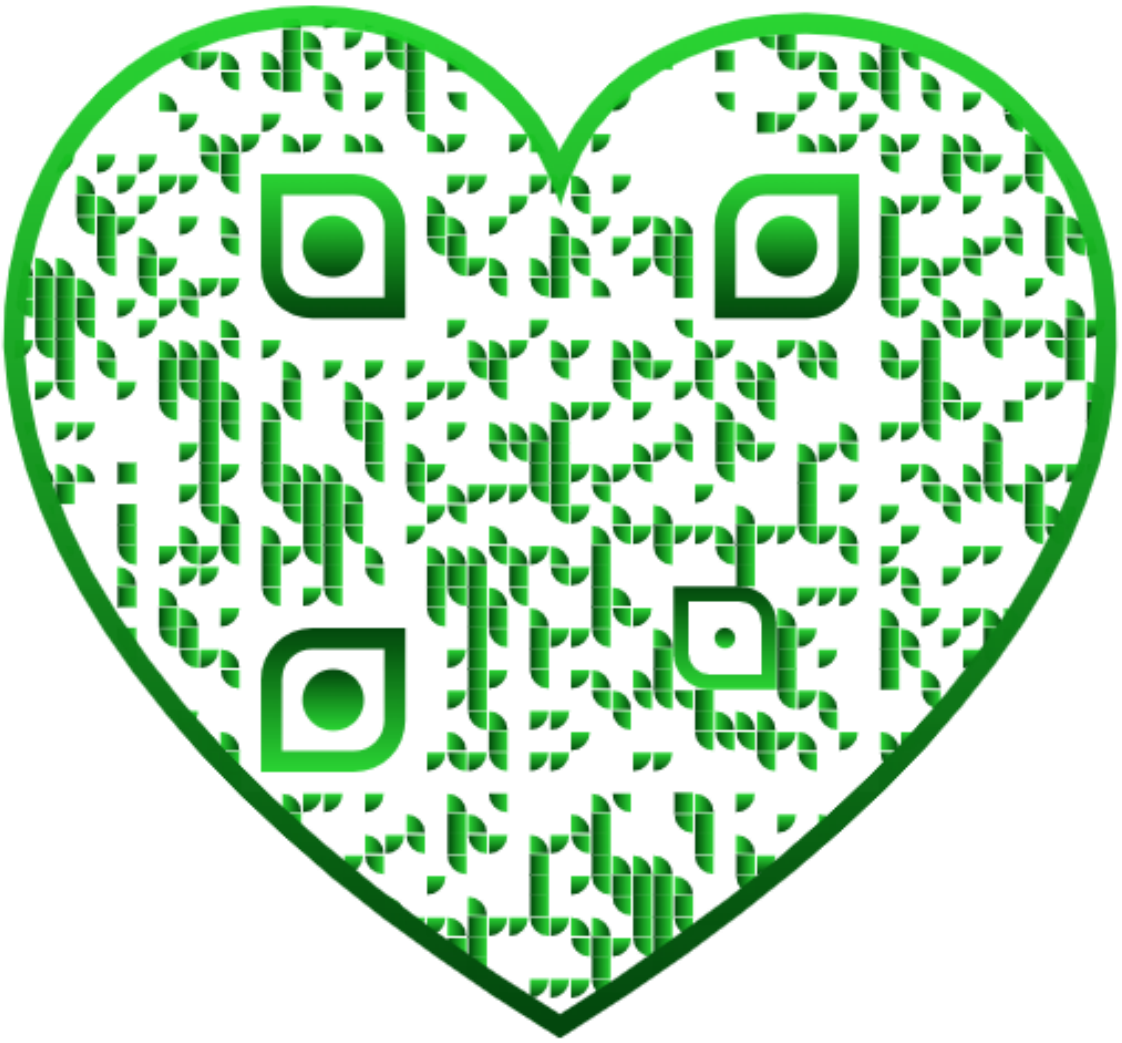
+ NEW MUSIC CRITIQUES



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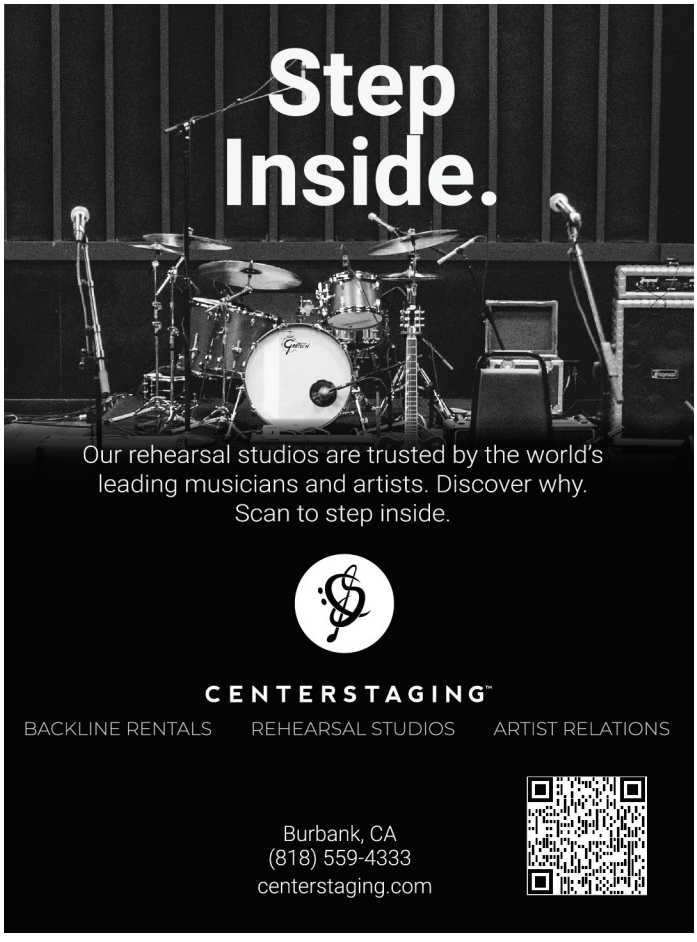

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Charles Laurence Productions

clpstudios.tripod.com

Recording and Restoration: Charles Laurence runs an attention-grabbing ad in *MC* headlined "Save Your Tapes!" While it focuses on his unique array of audio and video transfer and restoration services, that only scratches the surface. His Porter Ranch facility is also a one-stop shop and a true state-of-the-art recording, production, and remastering facility. Leveraging his educational background as a Chemical Engineering/Electronics major and Music minor at Cal State Northridge, he augments his 24- and 32-track analog and digital music production with an on-site grand piano, percussion, and multiple synths. His audio production library also includes thousands of sound effects. The main studio is dedicated to new recording projects while much of his space is dedicated to vintage analog tape restoration (including baking, transfers, legacy data acquisition, and digital transfer processes). His credits for remastering high-profile classic pop and jazz recordings include music ranging from Billie Holiday and Dizzy Gillespie to Ike and Tina Turner.

The Perfect Description: Rolling Stone wrote an extensive piece about the restoration of a quirky lost Beastie Boys track called "The Jerry Lewis." Laurence (who did the transfer of the original tape) was described as an "engineer, producer, vintage gearhead, a man with the Jerry Lewis spirit in his genes." The columnist was struck by how his home was "surrounded by thatched porches housing endless exotic fishtanks." The studio inside was even more remarkable: "His collection of gear runs from a 78-rpm lathe to a TOM sequential drum machine."

A.I. Technology Transforms Audio and Video Transferring: In 2010, Laurence integrated wide-ranging video capabilities with his existing production and restoration business. His services include 8mm, 16mm,

3/4 inch, Beta, and VHS film transfers to DVD, ½ inch video, mono 3/4 Umatic transfers, video editing, DVD duplication, and the creation of training videos. More recently, A.I. technology has added an exciting new dimension to this side of his business with its greater restoration capability. With A.I., Laurence can enhance old video up to 60 frames per second, improving the clarity and resolution of everything from old home movies to videotapes to all imaginable sources. A.I.'s noise correction capabilities (including the reduction of noise artifacts) also dramatically improve the sonic characteristics of video and transferred audio tapes, marking an additional advance in the state-of-the-art.

Contact Charles Laurence Productions, 818-368-4962

Bernd Gossi

Artist Relations and PR Manager
Austrian Audio

Austrian Audio has appointed experienced internal A&R candidate **Bernd Gossi** to the position of **Artist Relations and PR Manager**, effective immediately. Gossi brings a wealth of hands-on industry experience, including indie label operations, public relations for touring bands, social media management for a renowned Vienna-based music festival, and most recently Austrian Audio's in-house Marketing Specialist. His tenure with Austrian Audio began in September 2020 when he reconnected with long-time project collaborator Perry Damiri, Austrian Audio's Head of Marketing. For more, contact michelle@hummingbirdmediacom.

Jennifer Roe

Executive Director
Folk Alliance International

Folk Alliance International (FAI), a 501(c)3 and the foremost global nonprofit for folk music, has announced that its Interim **Executive Director Jennifer Roe** will be heading the organization. Roe joined the FAI team in 2013, igniting a passion for folk music. She assumed a pivotal role in leading FAI's staff and contractors and overseeing the day-to-day operations. Her dedication to the organization reflects her commitment to fostering the rich tapestry of folk music and sustaining a vibrant, interconnected community. With a political background prior to FAI, she is a strong advocate for arts and culture at both federal and state levels. For more, contact nick.losseaton@gmail.com.

Brian Sickles

Executive Director
Film Musicians Secondary Markets Fund

The **Film Musicians Secondary Markets Fund** has appointed **Brian Sickles** as **Executive Director.** Prior to his appointment, Brian held the role of COO at the Fund and for the last five years has been the driving force for many positive changes to better serve the film/TV music community. "Brian's new role marks the official end of Kim Roberts's nearly 10 years as Executive Director. We wish Kim a very joyful retirement and we look forward to Brian building on her strong legacy of modernization and commitment to our participants," reads a statement from the Film Musicians Secndary Markets Fund staff. For more, contact rkarami@fmsmf.org.

Erin Crawford

Lead Affiliate, Customer Service Experience
BMI

BMI announced that phase one of a broader growth plan to enhance its overall affiliate customer service experience is well underway with the initial launch of its new call center, as well as a new telephony system and a centralized toll-free number (844-BMI-4255) now in place. **BMI**'s **Erin Crawford**, who was recently promoted to **AVP, Affiliate Customer Service Experience**, is spearheading the new Nashville-based customer service department. With Crawford at its helm, BMI's new call center now features a dedicated team of customer service specialists. For more, contact jthomas@bmi.com.

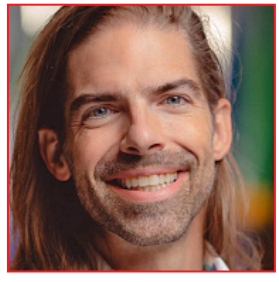
Matt Wechsler

Global Chief Marketing Officer
Roland Corporation

Roland has announced the appointment of **Matt Wechsler** to the newly created position of **Chief Marketing Officer**. Wechsler joins Roland Corporation following the brand's 2022 acquisition of Drum Workshop (DW), where he has been serving as the Chief Marketing Officer since 2021. Wechsler will oversee the company's full portfolio of brands, including Roland, BOSS, V-MODA, DW Drums and Hardware, PDP, Latin Percussion (LP), and Slingerland. At Drum Workshop, Wechsler has been responsible for the company's marketing function, focusing on driving strategic growth through brand management, consumer marketing, communications, digital, content, and artist relations. For more, contact danamonroe@maxborgesagency.com.

Brian Hall

Senior Director
C.F. Martin & Co.



C.F. Martin & Co. announced today that **Brian Hall** has joined the company as **Senior Director—Strings Business Segment Leader**, filling a newly created position and signaling the company's renewed focus on growing their strings business. Hall is an experienced executive who has worked with and consulted for numerous consumer brands in his 14-year career, including General Mills, Steinway, Whirlpool, and Kawai Musical Instruments. A multi-instrumentalist with a strong business background, Brian brings the creativity of a jazz musician and acumen of a data scientist to this role. For more, contact kate@richlynngroup.com.

Alina Akhmadullina

Director, Label Services
The Syndicate

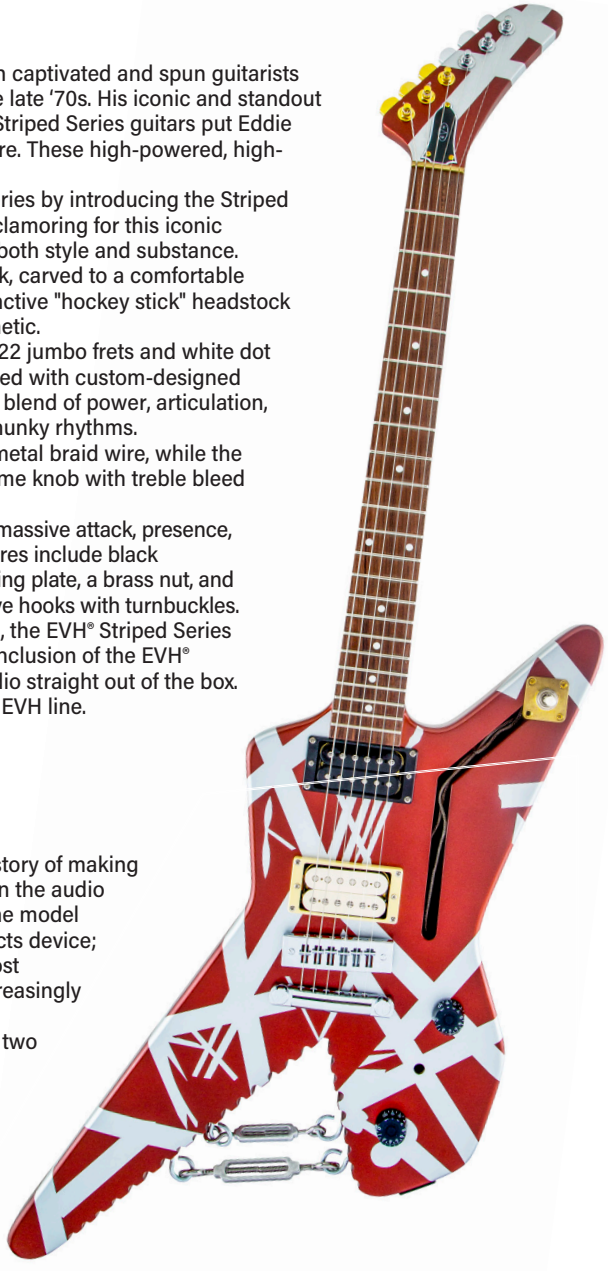
The Syndicate is expanding its Label Services/ Project Management department with the addition of **Alina Akhmadullina** as **Director, Label Services**. Led by music industry veteran Rob Gross, the year-old division of the company, which works with Round Hill Records, Rhino, Dine Alone, Vydia, and Stone Gossard's Loosegroove Records, to name a few, is poised for continued success. Akhmadullina comes from BMG, where she was instrumental in global marketing campaigns for Slash, Run The Jewels, Billy Idol, Mammoth, Godsmack, and Spiritbox (2024's Grammy award-nominated "Jaded") among many others. She began her career over a decade ago in artist management. For more, contact jeff@thesyn.com.

Adam Roth

Executive Vice President
The Recording Academy

The Recording Academy has appointed **Adam Roth** as **Executive Vice President of Global Partnerships & Business Development**. In this role, Roth will be responsible for growing the Recording Academy's global footprint internationally through the development and negotiation of high-impact integrated partnership programs with both globally recognized brands and local on-the-ground sponsors. Additionally, Roth will create new IP and build business around existing IP as a method for creating new global revenue opportunities for the Academy. Roth will also develop programs for the GRAMMY Awards season sponsors. For more, contact daniela.tellechea@recordingacademy.com.

▶ EVH STRIPED SERIES SHARK



A metal guitar innovator and pioneer of the highest level, Eddie Van Halen captivated and spun guitarists all over the world with his incredible sound and fingerboard virtuosity in the late '70s. His iconic and standout striped motif guitars are instantly recognizable as his "signature." The EVH Striped Series guitars put Eddie Van Halen's historic and authentic design in the hands of players everywhere. These high-powered, high-performance machines are as bold in their looks as they are to play.

EVH®, a division of Fender Guitars, adds to the already popular Striped Series by introducing the Striped Series Shark model. Crafted to meet the demands of discerning musicians clamoring for this iconic instrument, the Shark boasts a high-performance design that stands out in both style and substance.

Featuring an angular ash body complemented by a sturdy set maple neck, carved to a comfortable modified "C" profile, the Shark offers both durability and playability. Its distinctive "hockey stick" headstock and striped paint job on the back of the neck add a touch of flair to its aesthetic.

The fast-playing 12"-16" compound radius Pau Ferro fingerboard boasts 22 jumbo frets and white dot inlays, ensuring smooth navigation across the fretboard. The Shark is outfitted with custom-designed EVH® Wolfgang® Alnico 2 Humbucker bridge and neck pickups, promising a blend of power, articulation, and sustain, with a balanced EQ curve ideal for both sweet melodies and chunky rhythms.

Adding to its allure, the bridge pickup features parchment bobbins with metal braid wire, while the neck pickup boasts black bobbins with metal braid wire. A low-friction volume knob with treble bleed ensures seamless volume control and smooth volume swells.

The chrome-plated solid-brass harmonica bridge provides the Shark with massive attack, presence, and sustain, further enhancing its sonic capabilities. Other eye-catching features include black numbered speed knobs, a three-way toggle switch housed on a brass mounting plate, a brass nut, and gold and chrome custom EVH®-stamped Gotoh® tuners, along with chrome eye hooks with turnbuckles.

Available in the instantly recognizable Burgundy with Silver Stripes finish, the EVH® Striped Series Shark model is a testament to both craftsmanship and style. Plus, with the inclusion of the EVH® Striped Series Shark Gigbag, this instrument is ready to hit the stage or studio straight out of the box. Check out this Shark guitar (list price is $1,899.99) as well as the rest of the EVH line.

evhgear.com

▶ EVENTIDE H3000 FACTORY MK II AND BAND DELAYS MK II SOFTWARE

You would be hard-pressed to find many companies with a more accomplished history of making superior audio products than Eventide. Founded in 1971, Eventide is a true pioneer in the audio field and the inventor of the Harmonizer, which was first released commercially as the model 910 in 1975. The H910 was the world's first commercially available digital audio effects device; it combined pitch change with delay and feedback. The Harmonizer is a staple of most producers, engineers and artists to this day. Eventide has never stopped making increasingly powerful versions. Although it was released in 1987, the H3000 is still hailed as an indispensable tool for modern mixing. New this month, Eventide releases updates to two plug-in versions of H3000 algorithms for you DAW.

Billed as "The Holy Grail of Multi-FX," the H3000 Factory II plug-in is meticulously modeled after the original hardware. Distinct pitch-shifting, delay, filtering, and modulation are the core of the sounds available. I find there is a depth, size, clarity and openness to the H3000 plug-in that surpasses other products that attempt to do the same effects. With over 500 carefully crafted presets tailored for both music production and sound design, the H3000 Factory Mk II offers an endless suite of effects to infuse your next record with unparalleled creativity.

Ported from the legendary H3000 Harmonizer® studio processor, the H3000 Band Delays Mk II plug-in is a creative powerhouse for delays, filtering, stereo-widening, and dynamic rhythmic effects. With eight delay bands each featuring unique controls for level, panning, filter type, frequency, and Q, the H3000 Band Delays Mk II brings the flexibility and iconic sound of the original hardware algorithm to your DAW with a click of a button.

What's new in the latest string of updates in the H3000 plug-ins include: a resizable user interface, blending the classic look of the original H3000 Harmonizer® hardware; improved usability, with an expandable expert view and a smooth patching workflow; brand new modelling of the analog-to-digital and digital-to-analog converter sections from the original H3000, capturing the original sound of the hardware unit; a brand-new preset library, with recreations of presets from the original H3000; and filter recreations, modeling the resonance and self-oscillation behavior of the hardware.

The H3000 Factory Mk II sells for $199 ($99 crossgrade); H3000 Band Delays Mk II is $149 ($69 crossgrade); and together bundled, costs $248.

eventideaudio.com/H3000FactoryMkII; eventideaudio.com/H3000BandDelaysMKII

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▶ MUSIKHACK MASTER PLAN MASTERING LIMITER

Master Plan is an extremely powerful and versatile Mastering plug in for Digital Audio Workstations that is simple and easy to use and features an intuitive interface.

Master Plan delivers impressive results with simple controls. You don't need to be an experienced engineer to be able to achieve significant results. Designed as an all-in-one mastering solution, it sports crystal clear loudness, rich, analog saturation, phase-coherent imaging, physical tape emulation, mono compatibility and extra tools to fix and monitor your mix. Close your eyes and let your ears be the guide.

Featuring just a few controls, Master Plan sounds great. It can be broken down into six sections:

Input/Output controls: These are your standard level controls. Also present here is a bypass control—but here's the kicker—a Unity switch, which when engaged, let's you hear the effect of the Master Plan WITHOUT a volume increase. This is a great feature, as the tendency is that anything louder sounds better. Unity allows you to hear the sound without being fooled by increased volume.

Two tone controls, just Low and High: Frequency ranges can simply be described as "Buttery and Open." I found them to be effective.

Loud and Wide controls: The Loud dial brings up the gain of your mix and can bring the gain up to massive levels. If you are not sure how much loudness to apply, I would suggest having a mastered track you love available to compare as it's possible to overuse this parameter. The Wide control takes your mix and makes it sound even wider. For me, the most pleasant setting was around the 10-11 o'clock range.

The filter section allows you to hear what you master will sound like on a variety of systems. I found another use on a mix. I used the Phone setting on a vocal where the artist wanted to sound like a '50s mic. Bonus use!

Tone Presets. Thick, Clean, Multi, Smooth, Calm and Tape settings provide remarkbly different tonal settings to provide quick variations for your sound.

Metering and sound presets. This area features promeasurement in LUFS and Peak readings, as well as preset sound categories that can further establish your master sound in an efficient manner.

Busta Rhymes' new album *Blockbusta* was mastered completely with Master Plan, and is even mentioned in the album credits. Master Plan is an easy-to-use, low-cost, yet powerful and professional Mastering plug in. It is a powerful tool in your kit! At $89 for a perpetual license or a 5-month rent-to-own plan at $18 a month, it's a wonderful low price option for all musicians who want to get release-ready masters.

musikhack.com

◀ PRESONUS STUDIO ONE

The latest update to PreSonus Studio One, version 6.6, introduces a host of new features and enhancements, further solidifying its position as a leading digital audio workstation (DAW) for both Mac and PC users. With its 64-bit architecture and innovative tools for production, recording, mixing, and mastering, Studio One 6.6 substantially elevates workflow efficiency.

Key highlights of this update include seamless integration with TuneCore for direct uploads, support for Apple Spatial Audio binaural monitoring, and various workflow improvements. These additions empower creators to manage their projects, whether they're crafting music, podcasts, audiobooks, or other audio content, all within a user-friendly interface.

Through a partnership with TuneCore, Studio One users can now upload their masters directly from the DAW. The collaboration between PreSonus and TuneCore aims to enhance the user experience by streamlining the distribution process, enabling artists, songwriters, producers, and small labels to maintain their independence while reaching a wider audience. As a promotional offering supporting the new partnership, Studio One+ subscribers joining TuneCore will receive an exclusive code for 50 percent off of Rising, Breakout, and Professional plans for their first year after signup.

Additionally, Studio One 6.6 enhances its immersive recording and mixing capabilities by introducing Apple Spatial Audio monitoring, compatible exclusively with Mac systems. This feature provides users with accurate mix references, enhancing the translation of their music to Apple Music and Apple headphones. With head tracking and personalized profiles for compatible Apple headphones, Studio One 6.6 offers a comprehensive solution for immersive audio mixing.

Further enhancements include the expansion of surround sound formats and the introduction of Lead Architect, a powerful synthesizer tailored for lead sounds. Combining elements from analog and digital synths with field recordings, Lead Architect offers a unique blend of textures and effects, enriching the user's sonic palette.

Also, Studio One+ is now Studio One+ Hybrid, a subscription option that rewards users with a perpetual Studio One Pro license at the end of their subscription year. This ensures continued access to Studio One Pro's core library of content, including Ampire, samples, loops, and effects.

Overall, Studio One 6.6 reinforces its position as a versatile and comprehensive DAW, offering innovative features and seamless integration to support the creative process for musicians, producers, and audio professionals.

Pricing is tiered as follows: Studio One+ Monthly: $19.99; Studio One+ Hybrid: $179.99; Studio One Pro Perpetual: $399.99

presonus.com

MICHAEL STERN, C.A.S., is a Music Engineer based in Los Angeles. He has recorded and mixed 260 film scores including *Iron Man 2*, *Sex And The City 1* and *2*, *The Notebook*, and *Borat Subsequent Moviefilm*. He has also worked with artists Strawberry Alarm Clock, Richard Marx, Kenny Loggins, Jackson Browne, Micky Dolenz, The Cowsills, Bon Jovi, Tom Jones, Chick Corea, Lisa Loeb, and Rob Morrow. He can be reached at newtoys@musicconnection.com

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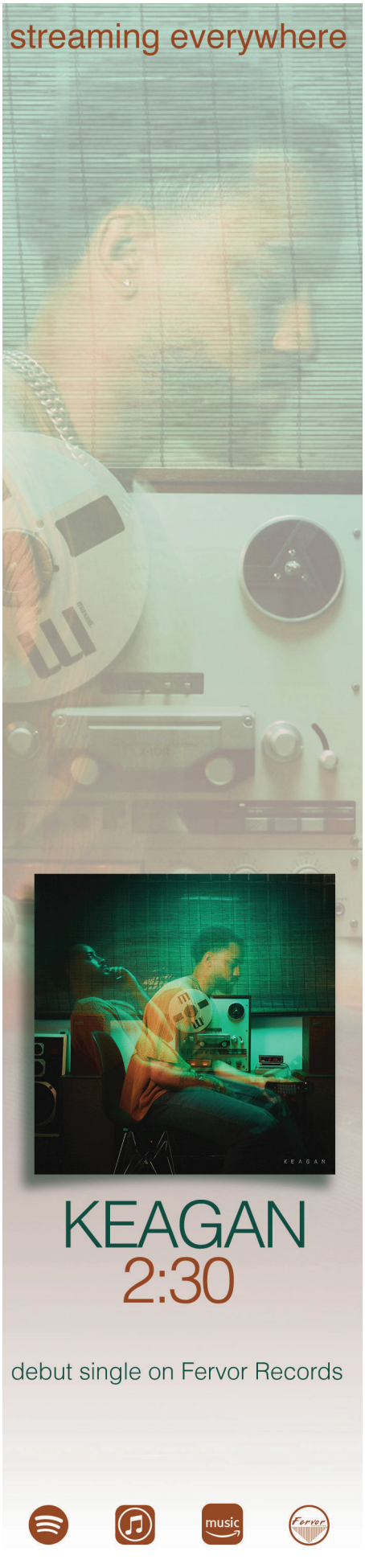


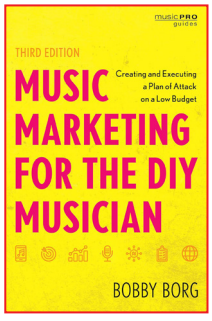
BOOK STORE

Music Marketing for the DIY Musician - Third Edition

By Bobby Borg

(paperback) **$105.00**

Industry veteran Bobby Borg provides a step-by-step guide to producing a fully customized, low-budget plan of attack for marketing music, helping to propel independent artists and other players toward success in the new music industry. This indispensable book for students and professionals alike, newly updated with fresh insights into the streaming world, will help you perfect a complete marketing plan to achieve your ultimate career vision.

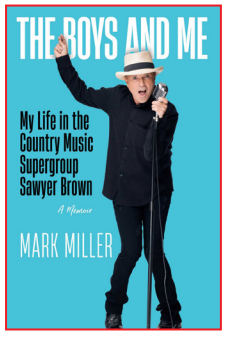


The Boys and Me

By Mark Miller

(hardcover) **$26.00**

Before *The Voice* and *American Idol*, there was *Star Search* with Ed McMahon. In the first season, a charismatic country-rock band called Sawyer Brown appeared on the show, won the competition and became overnight sensations. Lead singer Mark Miller's rise to fame wasn't the path he envisioned, having his sights on playing pro basketball, amid struggling with loss, faith and early stagefright. Forty years later, "the boys" have released 18 studio albums and have no plans of stopping any time soon.

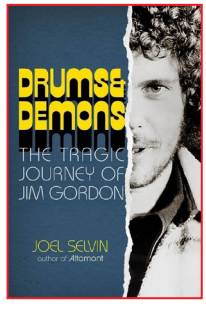


Drums & Demons: The Tragic Journey of Jim Gordon

By Joel Selvin

(hardcover) **$28.99**

Jim Gordon was one of the greatest rock drummers of all-time, working with world-famous musicians in the '60s and '70s: Lennon, Harrison, Clapton, Zappa, The Beach Boys, Steely Dan, Harry Nilsson, Joe Cocker, and many more. Meanwhile, Gordon suffered from a terrifying downward spiral into undiagnosed schizophrenia, and in 1983, he fatally attacked his 71-year-old mother. Acclaimed critic and author Joel Selvin gives due diligence and empathy to shed light on this tragic rock figure.

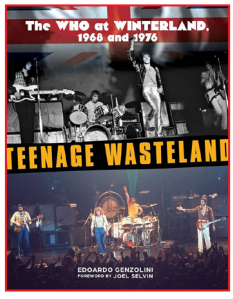


Teenage Wasteland: The Who at Winterland, 1968 and 1976

By Edoardo Genzolini

(hardcover) **$45.00**

At the Who's first Winterland Arena show in February 1968, just a few hundred San Franciscan hippies turned up. In March 1976, the venue was crammed to capacity—5,000 tickets were sold, with requests from upwards of 43,000. *Teenage Wasteland* provides a comprehensive look at the massive scale of the band's presence, growth and power, with more than 500 never-seen-before photos from previously unreleased archives and private collections.



The Ballad of Speedball Baby

By Ali Smith

(hardcover) **$25.99**

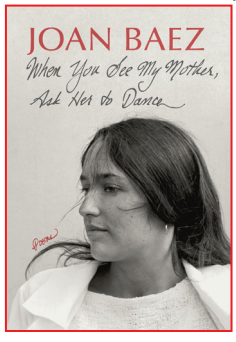
The New York City underground music scene offered a young Ali Smith a welcoming family of misfits and talented outsiders to belong to. Smith became the bass player for edgy band Speedball Baby, playing onstage at the legendary CBGB and the red-light district of Amsterdam. *The Ballad of Speedball Baby* captures the seedy underbelly of a male-dominated '90s music scene, full of addiction and violence, and serves as a love letter to the power of female solidarity.

When You See My Mother, Ask Her to Dance

By Joan Baez

(hardcover) **$25.95**

While Baez has been writing poetry for decades, she's never shared it publicly. Poems about her life, her family, about her passions for nature and art, have piled up in notebooks and on scraps of paper. Throughout the collection, Baez shares poems for or about her contemporaries, and cherished memories of her family, including pieces about her younger sister, singer-songwriter Mimi Fariña.



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Imaginando

imaginando.pt

From Touch Technology to Music and Beat-Making: In the late 2000s, Portugal-based software developer Nuno Santos was engaged in a fascinating dual life—serving on a team that developed touch technology to interact with digital content in public places like museums while gigging as a DJ using Native Instruments Traktor and using Ableton Live for music production. In 2014, merging his passions for music and technology, he launched Imaginando, a startup dedicated to creating original products that would make music production accessible to more people, centered around dynamic audio-visual experiences. With apps available across mobile and desktop, the company's innovations are designed to inspire artists to expand their own creative potential. One of the most amazing aspects of Imaginando's success story is the fact that Santos started it with his own money that he earned from developing the first version of an Ableton Live controller called LIVKONTROL for mobile devices. In 2015, he converted this software into Imaginando's second official product, LK, a flexible remote application offering tight integration with Ableton Live and providing access and control of its projects as well as powerful generic MIDI control and sequencing.

Imaginando Flagship Products: The company's first official product was TKFX, a full-fledged Traktor controller for iOS and Android devices. In addition to full decks, looper and mixer control with a jog dial, it allows the user to control Traktor effects in a powerful and intuitive way using an X/Y pad for each effect unit. In 2016, Imaginando released DRC, a powerful virtual analog polyphonic subtractive synthesizer that, through analog circuit modeling, recreates the characteristic sound of an analog synth within a minimal but strong set of parameters. Santos says it captures "all the great features of '80s synths." A later product, FRMS, is a virtual hybrid synthesizer that combines Granular, FM, Subtractive and Additive synthesis using a flexible layering system. It produces a wide variety of possible timbres, with a sleek and modern interface. Released in 2021, VS - Visual Synthesizer is a groundbreaking software that allows creating audio and MIDI reactive visuals in a way that is intuitive and easy for musicians, becoming the most successful product of the company to date.

BAM: In many ways the sum of all previous Imaginando experiences, BAM—released in November 2023—is a complete music production studio/beat maker and music maker that gives users every tool they need to quickly bring musical ideas to life. With an easy-to-use interface, it offers the opportunity to become an accomplished beat maker in minutes. BAM comes loaded with a variety of built-in synthesis engines and effects, oscillator synthesizer, sampler, drum synth, analog bass synth, analog emulation of drum elements, as well as filter, EQ, delay, chorus, compressor, saturator, etc. Another selling point is the extensive sample library, which offers a wide array of sounds that are easily accessible via the built-in sample manager and recorder. In April 2024, the company released BAM 1.1.0, an updated version with audio loops support, a new house themed sound bank and other features.

Quote from Nuno Santos: The idea behind the brand is to provide music software products to help people follow their dreams. We hope they never stop dreaming and trying to make exciting things happen. Imagining is a continuous process of creating and dreaming. We provide beautiful, easy to use solutions with friendly, modern interfaces to make our customers' musical goals easier to accomplish. Our greatest reward is seeing creative souls being able to express themselves by using the products we have created.

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▲ PRISM SOUND BRINGS 8 HOURS AT ROCKFIELD BACK

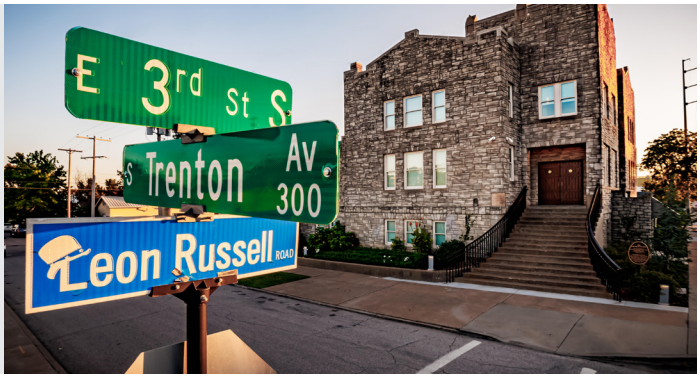
Prism Sound's hugely popular 8 Hours At Rockfield music production educational event returns to the historic Rockfield Studios in Wales in July. Held in conjunction with Pro7ect Residential Songwriting Retreats, 8 Hours At Rockfield gives participants an opportunity to learn about some of the most advanced pro audio technology on the market. Pictured is producer Julian Hinton, set to deliver Pro7ect's 2024 Songwriting Masterclass.

▲ DWEEZIL ZAPPA UNDER THE HAMMER

Analogr, dealing in unique music memorabilia, has announced an exclusive auction of items from the personal collection of Grammy-winning guitarist and composer Dweezil Zappa. Visit analogr.com to bid.

▲ BROWN'S PREROGATIVE

Pictured by Lynn Carey Saylor, legendary R&B singer Bobby Brown (left) was in Skip Saylor Recording, working with engineer/producer Skip Saylor (center) and engineer Alan Pohl (right) on the upcoming Bobby Brown Anthology Project, expected to release in 2025.



▲ CHURCH RECORDS

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Church Studio in Tulsa, OK, was turned into a recording studio and home office for Shelter Records in 1972 by artist Leon Russell, and after a significant renovation, it is presently operating once again as a recording studio with an exceptional analog collection, including a Neve 8068.

PRODUCER PLAYBACK

"Be picky. Train your ear to hear things. Not enough people spend the time to know what a frequency or a good guitar sounds like." – **DAVID PLATILLERO**

▲ LAUREN MINEAR CHASES DAYLIGHT

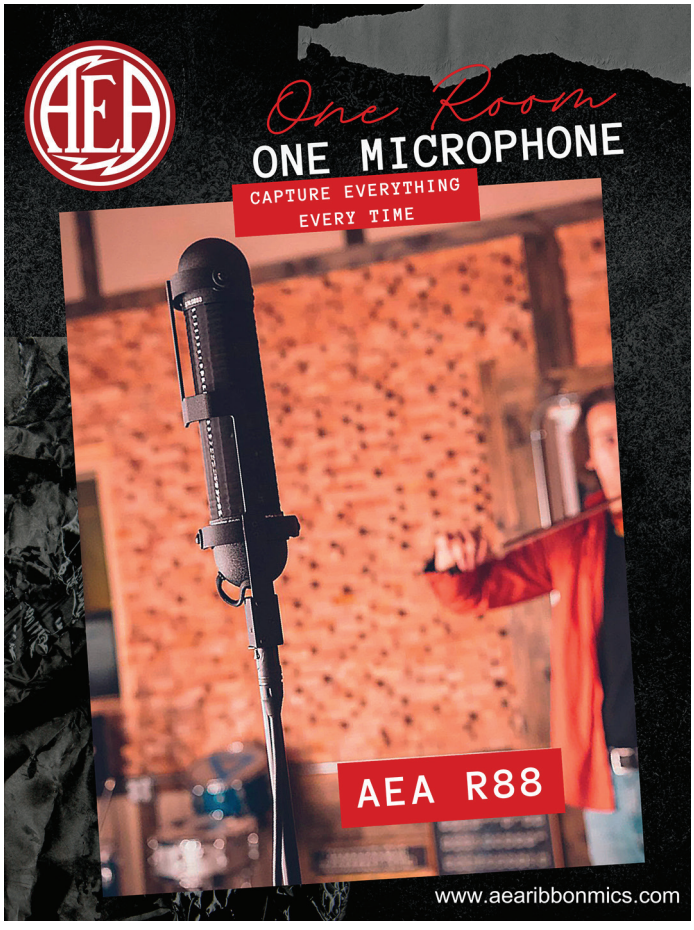
"Much of my forthcoming album, *Chasing Daylight*, was recorded remotely because I live in New York and my producer and co-writer, Dan Weeks, lives in London," Lauren Minear told *MC*. "We made demos on Zoom calls and then I would write and record lyrics in my home studio."

▲ MUO DUO PASS THEORY TEST

The photo was taken at the sessions recording *The Muo Theory* EP at Bunker Studio in Brooklyn, NY. The group is siblings Miles and Winter Donnelly. "Miles and I have naturally found a way to blend our vocal sound," says Winter.

▲ SONIC BLUME AND YOUR FAVORITE SONGS

Sonic Blume can be seen here recording the titular track from the record, *All Your Favorite Songs* at Lakehouse Recording Studios in Asbury Park, NJ. "For some of the songs on the record, we were tuning the drums to notes that were in the key of those songs," they say. "And the song that we happened to be working on right before this one, was a half step higher in key."



JEFF "GITTY" GITELMAN

At 15, Grammy-nominated jazz guitarist and producer Jeff "Gitty" Gitelman attended Berklee College of Music for a five-week summer program. Later he completed his undergraduate degree at the same institution. Post-college, he landed the touring guitarist gig with fellow Berklee alum Lauryn Hill and went on to jam on the road with Alicia Keys, Chance the Rapper and David Bowie, among others. While still a teenager, he craved even greater challenges and added songwriting and production to his repertoire. His talents won him work with artists such as Jennifer Lopez, Jessie Murph and Victoria Monét. Indeed, he was nominated for two Grammys, both for Monet's "On My Mama."

"Wild Ones," one of Gitelman's latest hits recorded by Jessie Murph and Jelly Roll, cracked the top ten on Billboard's Hot Country Songs chart recently. The tune was brought to life by the four-person team of Gitelman, Murph and songwriters Aldae and Feli Ferraro. "We were writing for Jessie and we just couldn't get it that day," he recalls. "We started with a good idea but we couldn't execute it. Sometimes when you're writing, everybody loves the first few bars but how do you turn that into a whole song? Then Jessie came down to her last hour and Aldae asked if I had any loops. I pulled out 'Wild Ones' from a few years ago."

It's easy to focus too intently or to become overly absorbed when working on a song and then lose sight of its viability. But Gitelman has developed a time-tested strategy against tonal tunnel vision. "There's a feeling you get when you know something works," he explains. "The idea that I come up with is not even mine. It's from a higher power. I believe in ideas more than I do in us as humans."

A great studio anecdote can provide insight into a producer's creativity and problem-solving abilities. One of Gitelman's favorites is from about five years ago when a singer was leaving the country and they thought that they'd recorded everything they needed from her. "But shortly after she left, we realized that she needed to punch in a line on the second verse," he recollects. "There was a songwriter in the room who said that she could imitate her pretty well so we let her punch it in. When we sent it to the artist, she loved it and never realized that it wasn't her voice on the record."

In 2023 Gitelman was ranked number ten on Billboard's Hot 100 Producers chart. "All of that just equates to the ultimate artistic freedom," he asserts.

One of his keys to success has been to write every day. Some of his latest projects include Lopez's *This Is Me... Now*, and Mary J. Blige's "Still Believe In Love."

He works largely at Playground Studios, his analog-adorned home workspace, the centerpiece of which is his vintage Neve 1073 preamp with Black Marinair transformers.

Visit instagram.com/jeffgitty

THE 3 MOST IMPORTANT

. . . lessons he's learned as a musician and producer are:

- You're in the service industry and have to serve the client. But at the same time, your choices make you you.
- You're also an artist and sometimes have to think bigger than the [recording] artist because ideas are bigger than we are.
- Our creativity is fueled by emotions but business can't be. Work out a problem internally first. Operate objectively.

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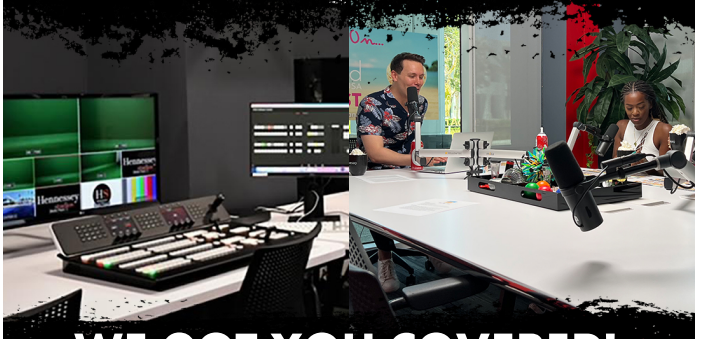

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Email: info@seekermusic.com
Publicity: Hannah Schwartz, Shore Fire Media - hschwartz@shorefire.com
Clients: Christopher Cross, John Ryan, Phil Plested, Charlotte Caffey, Run the Jewels, Jon Bellion

BACKGROUND

Evan Bogart has held many roles in the music industry, among them producer, A&R scout, manager and award-winning songwriter. With Seeker Music, he used all those experiences to create a unique record company that includes publishing, label services, and a song catalog with around 14,000 copyrights and master recordings.

Destination Seeker

These investors from the U.K. were looking to get into the music industry. They had spent about a year hiring consultants to make recommendations. And one of the ways they decided to get in is start an independent music company. They thought, "That makes sense for us." Catalogs they understand, because there are some apples to apples there with what they've done in real estate and other things. But they didn't understand the music industry. And they were looking for someone creative to align with. I got introduced to them by happenstance. They said, "If you were going to start a company from scratch, how would you do it?" I told them and, after three or four months of talking, they were like, "We'd love to sketch out a company with you." That was January 2020.

Investing With Heart

COVID happened, and the creative side of our business was paused. It was hard to get a lot of creative stuff done. I was kind of forced to focus on the finance side of publishing and the catalog side.

My partners surrounded me with some of the smartest people in the biz and crash coursed me on catalog acquisition, valuation, the finance side of publishing that largely I hadn't been exposed to. We started buying catalogs. I focused on catalogs of songs I wish I wrote and projects I wish I'd worked on. I invested with my heart before I invested with their money.

Artists and Music Are Number One

In everything we do, we think about the creator and songs first. How does this benefit the creator? How does this celebrate the song? And as a songwriter myself, [I think about] how I want to be treated as a songwriter or want my songs celebrated. That's the prism for how we look at everything.

Seeker Family Values

I would never offer someone a deal that I wouldn't sign myself. We've done a lot of catalog acquisitions where I've encouraged people to hang onto certain rights. Let's be partners. We want to be creative with you. We want to elevate your legacy and your brand. I want you to feel like you're winning when we're winning. I want you to be incentivized to collaborate with us. Even people who have sold us all their rights stay engaged, because we've come to them with creative plans.

> *"Run your race with blinders. Don't look at the other horses."*

A Songwriter's Dream

We just had a retreat with our songwriting team. It was our first. We're going to do it at the beginning of every year. We brought in experts from the A&R field and the sync fields. We brought in mental health experts and did guided meditation. We did sound baths. We taught people about the balance between work and life. And then we brought in experts to teach how to write for different things. I want to create the company that I wish I'd been signed to at any point in my career.

Working Catalog

We released all of Christopher Cross's music, including his first albums. Those are on Seeker Music now. Same thing with Run the Jewels. We work closely with Killer Mike, El-P and their team. We did a lot around their anniversary last year.

Letting Music Be Fun

Within Seeker, we have a label called music is fun. And everybody we've signed is pure fun. We signed this artist, Carr. She's basically Katy Perry with guitars. She's starting to make some noise. We signed this band out of Scotland called Dead Pony. The BBC is all over them. And there are a few other ones we're rolling out this year.

Development Mode

I'm not out there to sign Paramore. I'm trying to build the new one. Dead Pony's the next Paramore. I'm an artist development guy. It's in my blood. That goes back to A&R for Eminem's first album or helping manage Maroon 5 when they got signed or getting OneRepublic their first deal when I was an agent. I've always been in artist development mode.

Artists Seeking Evan

Contact us through seekermusic.com. I'm always checking my DMs on Instagram, so DM me music. When I have down time, I love discovering stuff. So does my A&R team. We're all ambitious about checking stuff out.

I'm looking for someone that understands who they are as an artist and brings their own perspective. I don't care about being huge on TikTok. Sure, the analytics are cool. But for me, I go back to the gut. I look for something unique.

A.I. Fears

I'm largely A.I. positive. There are valid and warranted concerns that need to be regulated. But I don't want that to deter people. In my conversations with people in The Recording Academy, there was all this fear. And I was like, "There's got to be something positive about this." So I threw myself into all the different A.I. programs for music creation. I realized most of them stink and have a way to go. And the ones I love utilize human-created sounds.

Songwriters Are Human

We've been using A.I. for years. There are A.I. elements in all the DAWs [digital audio workstations] and programs we've been utilizing. People are, in some ways, making much ado about nothing. I understand there are certain jobs that are more at risk than others. But there's a human element to composing. I don't think a computer can write "I Don't Want to Miss a Thing" or "Beautiful" or "Halo." There's something cosmic about songwriting. Melody is intangible. And it's hard to replicate that unless you have some connection to the universe.

Somebody tweeted something that stuck with me—"A.I. isn't going to take your job; someone who knows how to use A.I. is going to take your job." You can look at A.I. as your enemy, or you can say, "What parts of this are useful to me?" A.I. might come up with something you wouldn't have thought of on your own.

Party Time

We do celebration campaigns around songs and albums. We created a podcast where we engage music creators to tell the stories behind the songs. We've created a sample platform called Samplemoose that has resulted in some incredible releases, including a single from Coco Jones, which was nominated for Best New Artist. We're doing stuff around the sync world. We're doing themed camps. We make it fun. We make it celebratory.

And we get a lot of engagement from that. I think through the prism of how a songwriter would want to be engaged. So we try to create events and it's yielded incredible results.

OPPS

Warner Music Group wants a Creative Design Temp
This role will hold creative conversations for assigned projects, collaborate with stakeholders, and assets; Collaborate with content development teams, artists, and management on imagery/ storytelling concept to completion, overseeing design and can balance a variety of assignments (both help coordinate with the project team to execute final art. They are responsible for vision, art from physical and digital). Here you'll get to: Provide art direction, design and vision for physical packaging and marketing. Apply at LinkedIn.

Create Music Group is looking for a Client Services Specialist, Music Distribution
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Universal Music Group needs a Coordinator, A&R Admin
UMG is currently seeking a Coordinator of A&R Administration to be part of a very busy department and work closely with A&R, Business & Legal Affairs, and the Production departments that serve six major record labels. If you enjoy spreadsheets, numbers, showing off your organizational skills, and assisting the creative A&R process from behind the scenes, this is the perfect job for you. Apply at showbizjobs.com.

Ticket Master wants a Data Analyst
Ticket Master is looking for an experienced Data Analyst to join their team to support organization initiatives by providing analysis and planning across all areas of business. This collaborative role will query/pull data from multiple data sources, QA data, research and implement innovative ways to look at data, perform a wide range of formal and ad hoc analyses. This person will identify opportunities for improvements to product features and drive overall engagement by innovating new ways to look at data and providing analysis and insights. This person will partner with leaders across multiple functions including Sales, Marketing, Strategy, Product & Finance. Apply at data analyst.com.

Netflix wants a Coordinator, Music Creative Production
Music Creative & Production (MCP) provides world-class music support to Netflix's original films and Netflix cross-functional partners by guiding the music creative, scoring, and budgeting process from development to launch. Their goal is to empower Netflix to entertain the world by deepening fan engagement and to amplify storytelling through music. Responsibilities Read scripts and update correlating on-camera grids and one-liners to then share with Creative Manager. Manage, file, and track music budgets and liaise with Music Finance to ensure Cost Reports are up-to-date. Watch Dailies on active music projects and communicate updates to Creative Manager. Provide project-specific notes across both internal and external meetings, and track action items. Apply at Geek.

For More Career Opportunities, check out musicconnection.com daily. And sign up for MC's Weekly Bulletin newsletter.

▲ REYNA ROBERTS ENTERS THE BEYHIVE

One of country music's fast-rising stars, Reyna Roberts, is a featured artist on Beyonce's new album *Cowboy Carter,* on the tracks "Blackbiird" and "Tyrant." Reyna toured with Reba McEntire at the end of 2023. Contact bria.fisher@empi.re for more info.

DIY Spotlight DOLLY DAGGER

AUSTRALIA-BORN Los Angeles artist Dolly Dagger started on her musical journey in high school, taking vocal and guitar lessons, until she starts skipping classes to spend time in the music room.

"I didn't start looking at it as a career or take it too seriously until I had my first real band with people that also wanted to do a bit more than just jam in the garage, and we realized that it takes a little more than just playing a few shows and bothering your friends," Dagger says.

Dagger says that she and guitarist Jesse McInturff have landed on a doom and groove sound.

"I think genre-wise, there's a lot of ways that can go but as long as it dooms and grooves at the end of a session, we're happy," she says.

April 10 saw the release of new single and video "Tower."

"Louie [Diller, producer] and Jesse get really stuck into the riffs on this one," Dagger said. "Their energy was infections and it all happened super-fast—you put a guitarist and a drummer together with similar influences and a love for gear, and it's a recipe for some big hype energy."

Dagger sees "DIY" a a stepping stone , a chance too build a solid foundation as an artist seeks to climb to bigger things.

"Just like any business, it takes a lot of wheels turning together and even though I wear a lot of hats, the more we grow the less DIY it becomes and I'm so grateful for the people in our corner and do-it-together seems more fitting now," she says.

Looking ahead, Dagger has plenty planned for 2024.

"I'm heading off to Australia to play a couple of shows, and we're currently working on our next EP," she says. "We're super excited about the second half of this year and getting to work on finishing up those tracks."

For more information, visit dollydaggerxo.com.

PROPS

Namm Foundation celebrates 25 Years of Best Communities for Music Education

The **NAMM Foundation** has announced the recipients of its **2024 Best Communities for Music Education (BCME) Awards**, a signature program now in its 25th year of recognizing and celebrating school districts and individual schools for their support and commitment to music education and their efforts to ensure access to music for all students as part of a well-rounded education. Two awards are given: **Best Communities for Music Education (BCME)** for school districts and the **Support Music Merit Award (SMMA)** for individual school sites. For additional information about the BCME program and a full listing of award recipients, please visit nammfoundation.org/bcme

THE BIZ

Dua Lipa's Radical22 Signs Global Administration Deal with Warner Chappell Music

The recently launched independent media and management company **Radical22**, currently representing **Dua Lipa** and launched by her and her manager, Dukagjin (Dugi) Lipa, has signed a global administration deal with Warner Chappell Music, the music publishing arm of **Warner Music Group (WMG)**. The one-of-a-kind, bespoke agreement was arranged between Warner Chappell Music CEO Guy Moot and Dugi Lipa of Radical22 Publishing and follows the previously announced news of Dua acquiring her publishing outright. Contact info@permanentpressmedia.com for more info.

BRETT CALLWOOD, *MC*'s **associate editor,** has written about music for two decades, originally for *Kerrang!*, *Classic Rock*, *Metal Hammer* and more in the U.K. He's the author of two books, and was previously the music editor at *LA Weekly* and, before that, the *Detroit Metro Times*. A multiple award-winning writer, he's also a columnist at the *Village Voice*. He can be reached at brettc@musicconnection.com.

▲ THE DOLLYROTS ARE WRAPPED IN SUNSHINE

Super-sweet pop-punk and the Dollyrots have announced a West Coast tour as they released a video for their cover of Billy Bragg's "A New England." "We've got a thing about wishing on stars; it's been a reoccurring theme in our music since the start," said singer Kelly Ogden. "'A New England' is, in our opinion, the greatest song ever written that mentions wishing on something in the sky." Contact mike@earshotmedia.com for more info.

The LEGAL Beat

BY GLENN LITWAK

SONY MUSIC WINS COPYRIGHT INFRINGMENT CASE AGAINST RAPPER TREFUEGO

ON MARCH 27, 2024, a federal court in Texas ruled in favor of Sony Music in a copyright infringement case against 20-year-old rapper Trefuego. The case concerned Trefuego's Tik Tok hit titled "90mh" which had over 170 million Spotify streams. In the lawsuit Sony contended that "Trefuego simply stole Hinata's musical composition and sound recording, using them without asking and without permission, all in flagrant violation of United States Copyright Laws."

The court ruled last year that Trefuego was liable for copyright infringement., The March 27 ruling determined the amount of damages. The court ruled that Trefuego used an unlicensed sample (Sony holds the copyrights) from a Japanese composer's instrumental. The judgement awarded Sony $802,997.23. The judge also stated that "Trefuego's infringing conduct has and continues to severely damage and diminish the market for Hinata's work by falsely inferring that he endorses and/or supports Trefuego's use of 'Reflections' in '90mh.'"

The judge stated: "Sony pursued a reasonable, non-frivolous claim to vindicate infringement of it copyrighted work...The court hopes this case will serve as $802,997.23 lesson for defendant in carefully selecting the materials included in his raps."

One would think one of Sony's motivations to pursue this claim was to discourage illegal sampling by other artists.

Sony had requested a very broad permanent injunction to "permanently enjoin [Defendant] from copying. performing, or otherwise exploiting '90mp in any manner."

'The court denied Sony's request for the permanent injunction stating, "Because the pleadings establish that damages would remedy any future harm, the Court denies the injunction Sony requests." However, the court did hold that Trefuego was "permanently enjoined from copying, performing, or otherwise exploiting 90mp without (1) paying 50 percent of revenues connected to the 90 mp musical composition to Plaintiff Sony Music Publishing" as well as "20 percent of revenue connected to the 90mp sound recording" to Sony Music Entertainment."

Trefuego evaded being served with the complaint. An interesting aspect of this case was that the Court allowed Sony to serve Trefuego via social media direct messaging (TikTok. Twitter, Soundcloud and Instagram). Usually, a defendant must be personally served with a lawsuit by having a process server or someone other than the plaintiff hand the complaint to the defendant. In this case Sony tried seven times to personally serve Trefuego and hired a private investigator. Sony even tried to serve him at his mother's house on Mother's Day and she claimed she did not know him!

Typically, if a defendant can't be served after diligent efforts the court may allow service by publication in a legal newspaper.

GLENN LITWAK is a veteran entertainment attorney based in Santa Monica, CA. He has represented platinum selling recording artists, Grammy winning music producers, hit songwriters, management and production companies, music publishers and independent record labels. Glenn is also a frequent speaker at music industry conferences around the country, such as South by Southwest and the Billboard Music in Film and TV Conference. Email Litwak at gtllaw59@gmail.com or visit glennlitwak.com.

This article is a very brief overview of the subject matter and does not constitute legal advice.

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MODO LIVE PROGRAMME FACTOR | Canada JIM BEAM Ontario RBC MUSIC

Date Signed: February 2024
Label: SBG Records
Band Members: Daemien Drake, vocals; Mikey Lopez, guitar; Erik Tisinger, bass; Mike "Grizz" Weekley, drums
Type of Music: Rock, Rap, Alternative
Management: George Vlahakis
Booking: Imran Xhelili, Andrew Goodfriend - TKO
Legal: Eric German - MS&K
Publicity: Hannah Wright
Web: reddstarmusic.com
A&R: Shan Dan Horan

Finding the right people to work with can make or break your career. It seems like the connections made and consistently saying "yes" has paid off time and again for alternative rap-rockers Reddstar, who have just landed their biggest deal yet with SBG Records, a Sony subsidiary label that champions hard rock acts.

From their beginnings with a handful of demos in early 2020, the band leveled-up with the release of their debut track "STFU" in May 2021, followed by a distribution deal with Blood Blast. Their collaboration with producer Sahaj Ticotin (Mötley Crüe) set the stage for a string of successful releases, including "Bad Decisions," "Outsiders," and "Outlawz," which showcased their blend of alternative rock and rap.

"Too many bands these days play it safe."

Reddstar's commitment to authenticity has earned them a devoted fanbase and acclaim for their high-energy live performances, earning appearances at the Welcome to Rockville, Louder Than Life and Aftershock festivals.

As their momentum continued to build, Reddstar caught the attention of industry heavyweights, culminating in a record deal with SBG/Sony Records in December of 2023. The signing signaled a new chapter in the band's career, promising greater exposure and opportunities for creative expression.

Their debut single under SBG revisited and retouched their earlier track, "Bad Decisions," now featuring horror hip-hop duo Twiztid and produced by Matt Good (Asking Alexandria, Hollywood Undead).

"'Bad Decisions' was one of the first songs we cut with Matt Good and we knew it was gonna hit people when they heard it," says vocalist Daemien Drake. "We then wanted to take it a step further and thought we should add someone to the track to really give it more character and Twiztid came up as one of the groups.

""Too many bands these days play it safe and that's never been what this band is about since day one. Love it or hate it, we're not going anywhere."

""We're super excited to be working with the stellar team at SBG," says guitarist Mikey Lopez. "Everyone on Shan's staff is top-notch and has been an absolute pleasure to work with. We still have a ways to go on this release, but everything has been amazing with the rollout of the first two singles, and we're very excited about the growth and opportunities to come!"

Check out Reddstar's cover of the Neil Young classic "Old Man," featuring guest vocals from Rainy Terrell and produced by Jim Kaufman. Their debut full length album with SBG is slated for release later this year. ***- Joseph Maltese***

Date Signed: February 2024
Type of Music: Folk
Management: Do Less Management
Legal: Jason Barth
Publicity: Deborah Radel - DR PR - deborah@drpr.us
Web: oliveklug.com
A&R: Isaiah Beard

Having released multiple singles and their debut release, *Don't You Dare Make Me Jaded* since exploding on TikTok, contemporary folk artist Olive Klug has signed with new management following their return to Folk Alliance in 2024 (this year with a showcase, video coverage, and a panel), and has new music coming later this year.

Starting in theatre at age 7, Klug produced their first EP with a friend after graduating with a degree in psychology. Stalled from practicing the in-person counselling they were trained to provide due to the lockdown, Klug began posting music on TikTok. Picking up momentum by early 2021, they gained a lot of attention, especially following viral hit "Raining In June" (which remains their most popular song to date). The momentum prompted a move to Los Angeles.

A manager-friend with connections in the folk community helped Klug starting out and, attending Folk Alliance in 2023, he encouraged Christiana Sudano, founder of Do Less Management, to meet up with Klug. Sudano says they stood out and that, "Olive is just magnetic. Their voice is something I hadn't really heard before and the storytelling is game-changing." Sudano began working with Klug upon returning to Los Angeles, officially signing to management early this year.

"It's like somebody being able to say things that you can't, in a beautiful way."

Having Sudano's help means Klug has more space to create, without the constant stress of logistics. With four tours behind them, alongside Kevin Atwater, Odie Leig, and Daisy the Great—the latest involving a full band—Klug says they "have been through a lot in their career this past year," emphasizing that, "Having somebody to trust with all of that is huge."

Proud to be supporting Klug's next moves, Sudano adds "The way they celebrate music, look at things, and are able to put that into what I want to feel and hear... it's like somebody being able to say things that you can't, in a beautiful way. The resilience is what separates them from the rest. I'm thrilled to be on the journey for as long as they have me."

Upcoming singles are more Folk-Americana sounding and Klug says feel more relevant to their current state of being. A new EP with Isaiah Beard is in the works for later this year. ***- Andrea Beenham***

ORBIT CULTURE

Date Signed: January 2024
Label: Century Media Records
Type of Music: Swedish metal
Management: 5B Artist Management
Booking: United Talent
Publicity: Corinne Westbrook at C Squared - corinne@csquared.info
Web: www.orbitculture.com

Orbit Culture took more than 10 years to prove their mettle. Hailing from Eksjö, Sweden, the four-piece faced intimidating stakes: Proving they weren't just another melodic death-metal band from the country that brought legendary status to the subgenre.

Over the course of four studio records, as many EPs and heavy touring, Orbit Culture had solidified their character. The band had fashioned a fresh take on MDM that shined the subgenre with an urgent, tightly wound spin. The new sound distinguished the new group from forefathers At the Gates, Dark Tranquillity, and In Flames.

Now all they needed was to build a team around them. And here's where the story of Orbit Culture finding their footing in the industry gets fascinating: They managed to ink deals during the most challenging time in recent memory: the pandemic.

"We did a live streaming event during COVID, and while it wasn't the best, that's where we found our booking agency, UTA, and that led to us jumping on with a management company too," founder Niklas Karlsson said in a video conversation in late January. He spoke to Music Connection mere days after securing another critical part of the Orbit Culture crew: a deal with Century Media Records.

As the singer/guitarist put it, "the stars aligned" for Orbit Culture.

"Now, we really have to show our worth."

Deferring from divulging specifics, Karlsson called the Century Media pact "a very good deal for us and everyone involved.

"Everyone is super-happy," he added, noting that meetings with Century Media had lasted almost a year.

It's good fortune for Orbit Culture that, for a fairly young band, they're accustomed to taking a long view. After working the road to death over the past couple of years, while the Century Media deal put even more wind in their sails, the band is going to take a breather and set aside a substantial amount of time to deliberately work on their Century Media debut.

"We were supposed to play some festivals this year, but we decided to wipe our whole summer plans clean, focus on writing the new record and come back big in 2025," Karlsson said. "We'll head out on our first-ever headlining tour in Europe, but after that we will step back and try to write the whole record at home in the spring and summer. Now, we really have to show our worth." ***– Kurt Orzeck***

SLEEPYTIME GORILLA MUSEUM

Date Signed: March 2023
Label: Avant Night/ Joyful Noise Recordings
Type of Music: Experimental/progressive rock
Management: All American Entertainment
Booking: Eric Carter - All American Entertainment
Publicity: Cameron Odom - Tell All Your Friends PR - cameron@tellallyourfriendspr.com
Web: www.instagram.com/johnkanesociety

A band that straddles the not-so-fine lines between prog-fueled lunacy, dalliances in classical music, and acrobatics of the sensory and physical varieties isn't exactly an easy sell. For a circus promoter, maybe, but as a music project, in an age where the bands that are the easiest to market are the most inclined to get signed, Sleepytime Gorilla Museum is a tough pitch for a record label to swallow.

As deliriously flamboyant as their name suggests, the recently reunited Oakland crew of five members — each of whom play at least six instruments — leave concert attendees awash in the type of sensory overload that Gogol Bordello and the Flaming Lips strives to achieve. Sleepytime Gorilla Museum is not the kind of band that you dare tell what to do.

"We played a great show at [the now-defunct] T.T. the Bear's [Place in Cambridge, Massachusetts] where basically we spilled off the stage,"

"We're in the phase of doing what we do best, which is making notes."

recalled Matthias Bossi, who plays drums, glockenspiel, melodica, percussion, piano and xylophone for the band. It was his second interview since re-forming the underground, ultra-niche act. "We had to make an extension to the stage out of road cases."

He continued — a bit more far-fetchedly, one hopes: "We got on top of pile of festering rat carcasses."

While that comment begged further explanation, a time limit on the conversation stymied the relay of the full, animated anecdotes. Instead, we — joined in the video conversation by the other Gorillas — turned to the more serious topic of how the art project found its latest champion.

"Early on, everybody in the Bay Area was sort of putting out their own releases in one way or another," recalled the band, which formed in 1999. "And then, you know, somebody would get a little record label going and put out [records by] all the bands in the scene. Those things would sort of happen naturally out of the scene."

For their first album in 17 years, Of the Last Human Being, Sleepytime Gorilla Museum got a financial boost to reunite from Nick Ohler, the head of the new label putting out their record, Avant Night. The label joined forces with Joyful Noise for the February release.

"We always intended to come back," the band confessed. "We left some unfinished business back in 2011. ... We had a lot of anxiety about, you know, getting back on the road, but now that we're in the phase of doing what we do best, which is making notes." ***– Kurt Orzeck***

▲ SONY RIVER WALKER

River House Artists' bluegrass mandolin artist, Jarrod Walker signs to Sony Music Publishing for a worldwide agreement. Touring with Billy Strings, he co-wrote 2022's IBMA Song of the Year, "Red Daisy," and co-wrote Strings' "Everything's The Same," "Show Me the Door," and "Fire Line."

► WARNER RENEWS BENSON

With over a 60 year career, jazz great George Benson renews his partnership with Warner Music Group (via Rhino Records), building on 1976 *Breezin'* debut, earning three Grammys. It is one of the all-time best-selling jazz records. The 2009 NEA Jazz Master has new music set for release later this year.

▲ POPHOUSE BUYS KISS

Following partnership for Avatar Concerts arriving in 2027, KISS sells rights to their song catalog, name, image and likeness (including face paint designs), artist share of master and publishing rights, to Pophouse Entertainment in a deal rumored to be worth more than $300 million.

SESAC Enlists KOSCAP

SESAC Music Group (SESAC) has signed a global rights management agreement with The Korean Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (KOSCAP) to represent SESAC's Korean repertoire. The agreement makes SESAC the first performing rights organization to depart from the Korea Music Copyright (KOMCA). KOSCAP was formed in 2014 and deemed—alongside KOMCA—to be an official copyright collection society by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MCST) to increase regional competition.

The Harry Fox Agency's catalog will also be licensed and administered by KOSCAP, starting January 2025, and metadata company, Audiam (acquired by SESAC in 2021), has enlisted KOSCAP for exclusive U.S. music publishing administration, which will include mechanical rights royalties and audiovisual rights including YouTube and other platforms using their music.

ELVIS Act Arrives

Signed into State law in Tennessee by Governor Bill Lee in Nashville, the Ensuring Likeness Voice and Image Security (ELVIS) Act has established groundbreaking legal protection for voice and likeness against unauthorized use via deep fake and voice cloning artificial intelligence. Presented to unanimous approval with a 93-0 house and 30-0 senate vote by Senate Majority Leader Jackson Johnson and House Majority Leader William Lamberth, the initiative was supported by the lobbying work of heavyweight artists including Lindsay Ell (guitarist), Natalie Grant (vocalist), David Hodge (co-founder of Evanescence), Matt Maher (Christian artist), Chrissy Metz (singer), Jamie Moore (songwriter), Jessie Richard (RIAA), Michael W. Smith (Christian artist). Gebre Waddell (CEO of Sound Credit) is credited with the initial draft of the legislation. More at: bit.ly/3xz263c

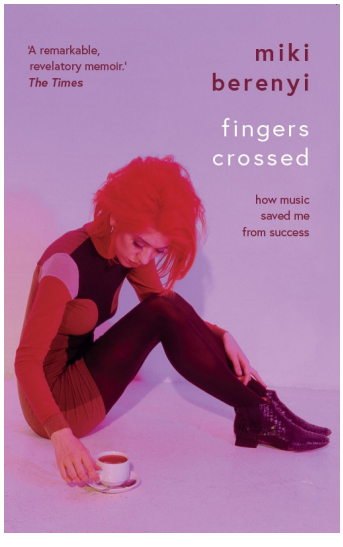
MLC Royalty Distribution

Formed as a nonprofit organization in 2021, following mandates included in the Music Modernization Act of 2018, the Mechanical Licensing Collective (The MLC) launched in 2021 to administer blanket mechanical licenses to eligible streaming and download services in the United States. Royalties due under those licenses are then tracked and distributed to songwriters, composers, lyricists, and music publishers, helping to ensure that creators and publishers are correctly compensated. The MLC website includes a publicly accessible database of musical works and a creator/publisher portal to submit and maintain data.

Curious about mechanical royalty payments for your work? The Mechanical Licensing Collective is hosting a royalty distribution webinar for members on May 21, discussing timing and cadence, statement reviews, and more, along with a full Q&A session. Details at: themlc.com/upcoming-webinars-schedule

Country Hall Inductees

2024's Country Music Hall of Fame inductees include best-selling artist Toby Keith (who passed earlier this year), John Anderson, and James Burton. Recognizing the longevity of their respective careers, Burton will be added to the Recording and/or Touring Musician category (only awarded once every three years), Anderson will see induction into the Veterans Era Artist category, and Keith will be added to the Modern Era Artist category. An official induction—Medallion Ceremony—is set for October at the Country Music Hall of Fame's CMA Theater.



▲ BERENYI'S FINGERS CROSSED

Lead singer and rhythm guitarist of U.K. band Lush (now of Piroshka and the Miki Berenyi Trio), Miki Berenyi releases autobiography *Fingers Crossed: How Music Saved Me From Success*, sharing internal private struggles from childhood, tragedy, and rising from pub gigs to shoegaze stardom.

NSAI Chapter Challenge

Through the end of May, the Nashville Songwriters Association International (NSAI) holds their annual "NSAI Chapter Challenge," with members of local chapters across the world given the opportunity to submit one pre-recorded song at their chapter meetings. Participants must be current NSAI members affiliated with the Chapter where they will attend and submit. Each member can submit one song which will be voted on by fellow members before advancing to round two, where an NSAI-appointed committee will vote for top 20 finalists. The final winner will receive a curated Music Row experience, including flights and accommodation.

To find and join a local Chapter, visit: nashvillesongwriters.com/chapter-search.

Listening Room Retreats

Returning to Idyllwild, CA in July, Brett Perkins' Listening Room Songwriting Retreat sits two hours from Los Angeles and provides a week of songwriter development that includes daily guided co-writing, ongoing input, collaboration, inspiration, and tools for continued development, along with private career/song consultations for participants. Includes an outdoor concert that kicks off the Idyllwild Songwriters Festival.

Open to all levels. More information and registration at listeningroomretreats.com

SMP Latin Award

Sony Music Publishing (SMP) has been named BMI's Contemporary Latin Publisher of the Year for the second consecutive year, marking eight wins over 10 years. Representing over 20 of BMI's most performed Latin songs in the U.S.—including Manuel Turizo's "La Bachata" (Edgar Barrera, Miguel Andrés Martinez), Bizarrap's "Shakira Bzrp Music Sessions, Vol. 53" (Bizarrap, Shakira), Bad Bunny's "Ojitos Lindos" (Tainy, Li Saumet), and others. SMP Songwriter Award recipients included Shakira, Bizarrap, Jorge Cedeno Echevarria, Joze Collazo, Mr. NaisGai, Dylan Wiggins, Miguel Andrés Martinez, Tony Dize, Li Saumet, Abner "Jota Rosa" Cordero, Albert Hype, and Winfred Lorenzo "Blue" Lovett. Complete winners list at: bmi.com/award-shows/latin-2024

2024 Songwriter Inductees

The Songwriters Hall of Fame will be inducting the class of 2024 in a ceremony in New York next month. This year's honorees include Hillary Lindsey, whose hits include "Jesus Take The Wheel" and "Girl Crush." "SexyBack," "Get Ur Freak On," "Pony," "Big Pimpin'" and "The Way I Are" have meant success for Honoree Timothy Mosely (AKA Timbaland). Dean Pitchford's hits include "Footloose," "Fame," "Holding Out For A Hero," and "Let's Hear It For The Boy."

For R.E.M., memorable hits include "Losing My Religion," "Everybody Hurts," and "The One I Love." Donald Fagen and Walter Becker (Steely Dan) hits include "Reelin' in the Years," "My Old School," and "Kid Charlemagne." More at: bit.ly/3U6V8v8

X Ambassadors Have Fervor

Songwriting duo Casey Barres and Jesse Morrison, better known as CooBee Coo, provide the impetus for X Ambassadors' new release "No Strings." The familiar melody is from "Snake In The Gravel," off the band's 2012 Fervor Records release *Melodies From The Farm*. "No Strings" is the lead off single from X Ambassadors' new Virgin Records release *Townie*.

ANDREA BEENHAM (aka Drea Jo) is a freelance writer and marketing consultant based in Southern California. The South-African born, Canadian-raised California transplant has a passion for music, people and fun. She can be reached at drea@dreajo.com

▲ KANDEL FOR NETTWERK

Singer-songwriter-producer/multi-instrumentalist Theo Kandel signs to Nettwerk Music Group, following the release of EP *Somewhere Along the Trail, Vol. 1*. Lead single, "Flight to JFK" has accrued 470k streams. Kandel has supported Evan Honer, ROSIE and John Oates, in addition to headlining.

▲ MOSEY TO CINQ

Cinq Music has signed Lil Mosey to global distribution. Alt-pop release "Life Goes On" is out now, ahead of full album via his own independent label, *Love U Forever*. "Blueberry Faygo" racked 2+ billion streams. The deal follows Cinq's $250 million funding from GoDigital. More at: cinqmusic.com

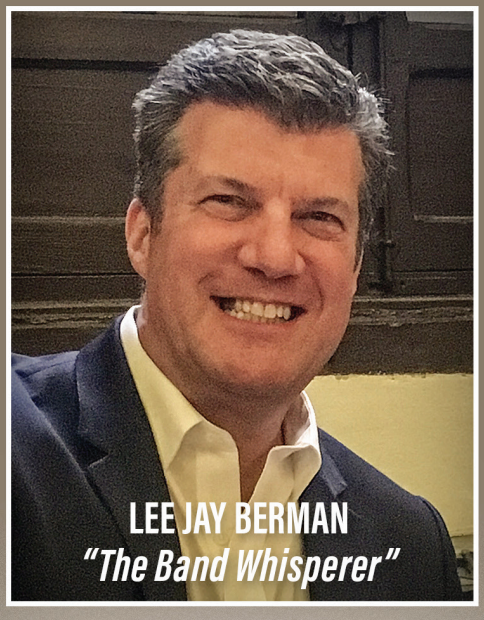
▲ AIMP'S INAUGURAL CAMP

AIMP LA's inaugural songwriting camp was a tremendous success, creating 15 songs with 14 participants (including producers and topliners of various experience levels) through rotating and writing collaborations over three days. Hosts are Angry Mob Music. Ongoing event details at: aimp.org

▲ BMI HONORS PALENCIA

Now the recipient of over 50 BMI Latin awards, Horacio Palencia has received 2024's President's Award for profound contribution to Mexican music. Hits include, "A Través Del Vaso," "2 VECES," and "Ya Es Muy Tarde," Pictured (l-r): BMI's Jesus Gonzalez, Horacio Palencia, BMI's Mike Steinberg.

Band Conflict?
Partnership Issues?
Contract Disputes?



AMEC 2024 Counsel of the Year Award for Excellence in Alternative Dispute Resolution

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- Guitarist, Grammy Winning Rock Band

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Mama B

Legacy Work

With over 20 years as an artist and music executive, Jacq Becker—under her moniker Mama B—is releasing a second children's album, following the success of 2021's collaboration, *Zoology* (which amassed 50+ million digital and 14+ million YouTube streams). Having performed as a pop artist at Los Angeles' Hotel Café, The Mint, Harvelle's, Room 5, etc., and shows in Sweden, Nashville, and the Caribbean, Becker has placements in major TV and film (including *Top 5, Pretty Little Liars* and *Seven Days in Utopia*), and leads prominent songwriter and publishing teams, helping artists develop their creative vision and monetize their work.

First studying classical music before switching to jazz, then pop, Becker holds a deep love of lyrics and melody, emphasizing her affinity for "timeless songs and energy," and was drawn to Norah Jones and the idea of audiences sitting quietly and truly listening. First writing as a teen, her focus expanded to business in her 20's, and she is passionate about helping women improve their music business and publishing education, and exploring options. Says Becker, "I get the pleasure of helping expand their business and shining light on songwriters and producers. I feel very lucky to be doing it." To have a sustainable career in music, Becker advises a focus on learning about publishing, rights management, monetization, and exploring the organizations that manage it all.

Leading with melody, then tone of voice and production, Becker says that what resonates most in music for her is the collaboration, emphasizing the dramatic difference between the sound that comes out of a collaborative project versus the energy felt from constant 'session-churning.' "You can hear that trust in each other," she says. "I listen for musicianship of the whole song (not just melody and lyrics) [and] how it came together." In repeat collaborations, she says, "I trust their instincts. It's [about] bringing the right people together with different skill sets that meld together." See differences as an enhancement, not a threat, and when entering first-time collaborations, Becker says to be as prepared as possible by bringing a few concepts or lyrical ideas.

Struggling to find children's music she could listen to when she became a mom, Becker felt she could add something and, inspired by the musings of her children and their friends, worked to make music from their perspective while adding contemporary production. Says Becker, "We're trying to take everything we know about song composition and structure and not do anything different because it's for kids and families. Why would the formula change?"

Starting organically with guitar and piano melodies, using live instruments and no corner-cutting, Becker wanted to deliver purpose and meaning. Taking two years to complete, some sessions had starting points ("Princess In A Castle" was a request of her son's classmate), or incorporated elements she heard her children jamming out to (Harry Nilsson's "Coconut" inspired "Puffer Fish"). Finding a lightness and joy that was missing in the pursuit of pop affirmation, children's music reignited her songwriting passion. "There were no restrictions on creativity. The fact that we took so much time with it speaks to the integrity of the project," says Becker. "Everything about it was pure, honest, and no pressure, which is a good place to be when you're releasing music."

Imaginology feels like *Reading Rainbow*-meets-The Spice Girls: fun, catchy, and equal parts soothing and enjoyable for all ages. Set for release on Mother's Day.

Contact Jon Bleicher, Prospect PR - jon@prospectpr.com;
Experience Mama B at instagram.com/mamabsongs

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DROPS

Following a record-breaking, digitally restored IMAX worldwide release, ***Queen Rock Montreal*** drops on May 10 with double Blu-ray, double 4K Ultra High Definition packages and double CD and triple vinyl packages. This concert film captures the 1981 recording of the iconic rock band **Queen's** return to Montreal, Canada for two concerts on Nov. 24 and 25 after two years of touring and the release of some of their greatest hits, marking a watershed moment in the band's history. The performances were arranged specifically to be filmed for a full-length concert film, and director Saul Swimmer planned to shoot them using state-of-the-art Double Anamorphic 35mm footage, so it could be projected on a gigantic, five-story-high screen. Contact Carol Kaye at carol@kayosproductions.com for more information.

The soundtrack for the limited series ***Palm Royale*** is now out on all streaming platforms, with music by composer **Jeff Toyne.** The series, starring **Kristen Wiig, Ricky Martin, Allison Janney** and **Laura Dern,** made its global debut on Apple TV+ in March. Toyne said of the 29-track soundtrack, which fuses jazz, latin and orchestral elements, that it was the "most exciting and rewarding musical assignment" he's had to date. The series follows a woman's journey to climb the social ladder in 1969 Palm Beach. For more information, contact Sarah Roche at sarah@whitebearpr.com.

A new, multi-faceted campaign to celebrate the music and nostalgia of the 2000s from **Disney Music Group** is giving fans the chance to reconnect with the music, artists, TV shows, movies, fashion and friendships that defined the era with weekly activations across social platforms and playlisting. Celebrating the likes of **Hilary Duff, Jesse McCartney, Vanessa Hudgens, The Cheetah Girls, Corbin Bleu, Selena Gomez** and more, the campaign runs through August leading into **D23 2024: The Ultimate Disney Fan Event.** In addition, DMG partnered with Hollywood's **El Capitan Theatre** for a three-day celebration of the box office toppers ***Jonas Brothers: The 3D Concert Experience, Hannah Montana: The Movie*** and ***Hannah Montana & Miley Cyrus: Best of Both Worlds,*** which showed in April. The campaign features weekly #throwbackthursday offerings with videos and "then and now" engagement posts for each featured artist. Email Lillian Matulic at lillian.matulic@disney.com for more information.

JORDAN DAVIS, CMT AWARDS NOMINEE

In a recent episode of **Hollywood Records'** music docuseries and podcast ***The Big Score,*** composer and **DEVO** lead singer **Mark Mothersbaugh** (***Thor: Ragnarok, The Mitchells vs. the Machines***) discusses his score for ***A Real Bug's Life*** in which he aimed to give insects emotional depth through his music. *The Big Score* offers first-person audio and video vignettes from composers, artists, directors and others who offer behind-the-scenes insight into the music for influential and award-winning films and television. The podcast is widely available on streaming services, and the docuseries premieres on YouTube. Find Mothersbaugh's episode and all previous ones at hollywoodrecs.lnk.to/thebigscore and contact Kyrie Hood at kyrie@whitebearpr.com for details.

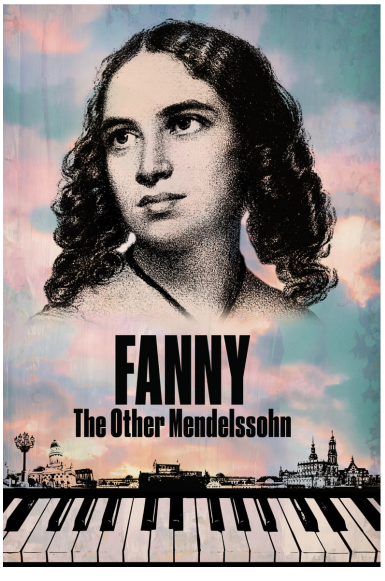
The theatrical release of ***Chicago & Friends in Concert*** premiered on April 18 and April 21, in select theatres via **Iconic Events Releasing, Mercury Studios** and **FanTracks**. **Chicago**, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame-inducted band with more than 100 million albums sold worldwide, feature in this 2 1/2-hour cinematic event, which was recorded last November at the Ocean Casino Resort's Ovation Hall in Atlantic City, NJ before a live audience of 10,000 over two nights. In a rare event, the band was joined by special guests **Robin Thicke, Chris Daughtry,**

Steve Vai, VoicePlay, Judith Hill, Robert Randolph and **Christone "Kingfish" Ingram.** Each performance is visualized in vibrant video and animation, and the event celebrates the 55th anniversary of the band's double-platinum debut album, ***Chicago Transit Authority.*** Contact Carol Kaye at carol@kayosproductions.com for details.

After **Hollywood Records** released the theme from **Marvel Animation's *X-Men '97*** earlier this spring, the soundtrack will drop on May 24. The new, 10-episode series about the X-Men—a band of gifted mutants—was directed by **Jake Castorena, Chase Conley** and **Emi Yonemura.** The theme is performed by composer duo the **Newton Brothers** (***Goosebumps, Five Nights at Freddy's***) and can be found on most streaming platforms, while series epi ntact Christian Endicio at christian@whitebearpr.com.

OPPS

Aspiring musical theater songwriters who haven't yet hit the big time might be eligible for the **Fred Ebb Award**, for which submissions will be accepted throughout the month of June. Learn more, see past recipients and submit your work for consideration at fredebbfoundation.org/fred-ebb-award.



June 21 is the "super late" deadline to submit your work to the **London Music Video Festival**, which will take place July 1 and stream winning videos in a free, worldwide online show and promote them throughout the year. Visit filmfreeway.com to submit your work for consideration.

Films can be submitted until June 22 to be considered for this year's **New York Indie Shorts Awards.** The event, which takes place Nov. 14-17, honors short films in categories including music video, comedy, horror and more. For more information and to submit your work for consideration, visit filmfreeway.com/indieshortsawardsnewyork.

PROPS

Marking a milestone for labels and video game players, **Universal Music Group** and **Republic Records** have launched **Boombox**, the first scaled music product across **Roblox**, an online game platform and game creation system. Designed and powered by **Styngr**, Boombox allows music labels to dynamically launch playlists and integrate them into the gaming space. Boombox launches with South Korean girl group **Twice** on their ***Twice Square*** experience—the most visited music experience in Roblox history—allowing players to share and collectively enjoy music with each instance of music playback being monetizable for the contributing labels and artists. While changing the way that fans engage with their favorite music and artists, Boombox is also helping developers and advertisers reach new audiences across the Roblox platform. Contact Katie Altman at kaltman@id-pr.com for details.

Mercury Studios releases new feature documentary ***Fanny: The Other Mendelssohn*** on May 17. Starring global Decca artist **Isata Kanneh-Mason** and directed by the subject's great great great granddaughter, BAFTA-winning filmmaker **Sheila Hayman,** the film is about the life of the unsung **Fanny Mendelssohn,** sister to **"Wedding March"** composer **Felix Mendelssohn** and a musical genius in her own right who defied her brother's disapproval at age 40 and began to publish her music under her own name. The film also includes pianist **Sarah Rothenberg,** whose pioneering recording of Mendelssohn's **"Das Jahr"** features in the story. Contact Carol Kaye at carol@kayosproductions.com for more information.

Bette Midler made it famous, but it's **Darci Monet**'s uncredited voice singing "The Rose" in the 2004 hit ***Napoleon Dynamite*** early in the film. Monet's vocal is center stage as members of the Happy Hands Club memorably perform ASL along to the song for their fellow students. In celebration of the film's 20th anniversary and her contribution to it, she has recorded a full length version of the iconic ballad, currently available on all streaming platforms.

JESSICA PACE is a music journalist-turned-news-reporter based in Durango, CO. She is from Nashville, where she started a writing career by freelancing for publications including American Songwriter and *Music Connection*. Contact her at j.marie.pace@gmail.com.

OUT TAKE

Andrea Farri

Composer

Website: andreafarri.bandcamp.com
Contact: Micah Benton, mbenton@shorefire.com
Most recent: *Io Capitano*

FILM COMPOSER Andrea Farri was gifted a piano as a young musician by legendary Italian actor Roberto Benigni and spent his childhood playing multiple instruments and writing music. "When I was seven years old, I discovered John Ford movies. I loved the huge sky, horses running, cowboys and all the amazing soundtracks with violins. At that age, I decided I would like to work in cinema and make music for movies," Farri says.

While still a teenager, Farri provided music for theatre and dance companies, including playwright and screenwriter Tom Stoppard's *The Coast of Utopia*. Most recently, he scored Matteo Garrone's *Io Capitano,* an award-winning, Golden Globe-and Oscar-nominated film about two Senegalese men who travel across Africa and the Mediterranean to reach Europe. The film earned Farri a Best Soundtrack award at its Venice Film Festival premiere.

"*Io Capitano* tells the story of a great adventure. The protagonist was like a modern Ulysses. It was important that the music was epic. It was a coming-of-age story as well. A classical approach could not be used, so I tried to blend acoustic instruments with electronic music to have a contemporary atmosphere," Farri says. Farri combined both classical and contemporary genres, incorporating traditional African sounds as well as the voices of the film's main actors. "I think that the thing I learned was that, because the film is a long odyssey and an adventure, the challenge of the score was to hold the movie together – with all the different things that happen – without using too many different kinds of music."

Farri recently worked with the London Contemporary Orchestra on music for an upcoming American television show, Roland Emmerich's *Those About to Die*, as well as Peter Chelsom's *A Sudden Case of Christmas*, due out this year.

► FEID WINS ASCAP SONGWRITER/ARTIST OF THE YEAR

Multi platinum, nine-time Latin Grammy-nominated Colombian artist Feid accepted the El Premio ASCAP Award for "Songwriter/Artist of the Year" early in April. He was recognized for his outstanding songwriting on hit songs "Classy 101," "Hey Mor," "Niña Bonita," "Normal," "Yandel 150," and "Feliz Cumpleaños Ferxxo."

▲ TICKLE ME, NOAH KAHAN

GRAMMY® Best New Artist nominee and multi-platinum singer-songwriter Noah Kahan stopped by Sesame Street to play hit single "Stick Season" for Elmo and the gang.

◄ YOUNG PEOPLE'S CHORUS OF NEW YORK CITY'S BENEFIT GALA CONCERT

The Young People's Chorus of New York City (YPC) held its annual gala benefit concert at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Frederick P. Rose Hall in N.Y.C. The evening included a concert featuring the diverse voices of over 400 talented young choristers from all five of NYC's boroughs coming together to sing repertoire that spanned Broadway to Mainstream.

▲ DRAG! THE MUSICAL!

The stars were out in March for the opening night of DRAG: The Musical! Back onstage at the Bourbon Room in L.A. due to popular demand, DRAG: The Musical is the brainchild of Drag Race legend Alaska Thunderfuck, who co-wrote and stars in the production. Alaska is seen here flanked by Jesse Tyler Ferguson, Melissa McCarthy, Elizabeth Banks, and Adam Shankman.

– BRETT CALLWOOD brettc@musicconnection.com

▲ RIAA HONORS BRETT YOUNG

The Recording Industry Association of America® (RIAA) hosted a soiree at the Adventure Science Center in Nashville in March with Big Machine Label Group, to celebrate superstar Brett Young. Pictured l-r: Otter Creek Entertainment's JT Pratt and Haley McLemore; RIAA's Erin Burr; Otter Creek Entertainment's Van Haze; RIAA's Morna Willens; Brett Young, RIAA's Jackie Jones; Nashville Harbor Records & Entertainment's Jimmy Harnen.

◄ MARIAH THE SCIENTIST'S SOLD OUT SHOW

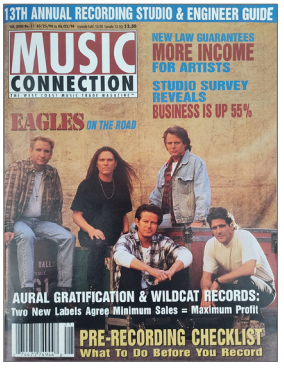
Mariah The Scientist's sold-out To Be Eaten Alive Tour began its domestic leg in early March after a sold-out nine-date trek through Europe, and the surprises are rolling in. Mariah, a proud native of Atlanta, was graced by the presence of none other than R&B legend Usher at her latest show.

► YG AND BMG

YG announced a new multi-album global recordings partnership with BMG under his 4Hunnid Records label. This partnership sets the stage for the release of his upcoming seventh solo studio album. Pictured, l-r: BMG's Diallobe Johnson and Dan Gill, 4Hunnid's Brandon Moore, YG, LaPolt Law's Mariah Comer, BMG's Jon Loba and Tim Reid

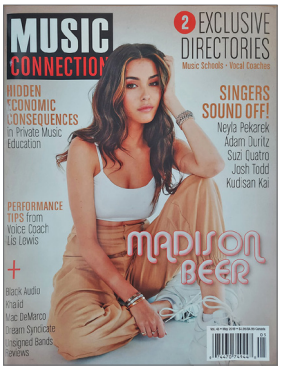
MUSIC CONNECTION

Tidbits From Our Tattered Past



1994–The Eagles–#18

On the cover of our 1984 Recording Studio and Engineer Guide was iconic country rock band The Eagles, as they embarked on the Hell Freezes Over reunion tour. "We were nervous," Don Henley admitted. "We wanted to be sure we were prepared. It was the first time we played in front of an audience together in 14 years."



2019–Madison Beer–#43

Singer and songwriter Madison Beer made the cover in 2019, telling MC that: "I used to hate my voice—I was away comparing myself to other artists and I found myself tearing myself down. Now, I appreciate my voice for what it is." Meanwhile, in our Singers Standoff feature, Adam Duritz of Counting Crows said, "I'm kind of a monk on tour. I don't go out a whole lot like I used to. I was younger then, too. But I think I fucked my voice up more when I was younger. After the gigs, I'm just back in my hotel room."

Limited backissues available to order at musicconnection.com

French Montana

By Adam Seyum

Photos by Zay Jones

In order to succeed in the competitive world of rap music, more than just talent is required. It takes perseverance, dedication, and a bit of luck. French Montana is an artist who embodies all of these qualities perfectly. Through his unique blend of catchy beats and smooth rhymes, Montana has built a strong reputation for himself, starting from humble beginnings in Morocco and reaching the heights of hip-hop success. Despite facing numerous challenges and setbacks along the way, he has persisted and is now recognized as one of the genre's most prominent and influential figures. But how exactly did he gain recognition in the hip-hop community? Good question.

French Montana, whose real name is Karim Kharbouch, was born on November 9, 1984 in Casablanca, Morocco. He is the child of Abdel Kader Kharbouch and Khadija Guled. During his upbringing, he enjoyed playing soccer and listening to rap music in his family home. In the mid-1990s, Kharbouch and his family moved to the South Bronx in New York City, where he attended both elementary and high school. Despite balancing his studies at Roosevelt and Lehman High Schools, he also worked to support his family. Although his parents decided to return to Morocco, Kharbouch's mother chose to stay in the country with her children.

Parenting is a significant source of inspiration for Montana, who is skilled in Arabic, French, and English. Previously, he owned Selena Gomez's property in Calabasas, CA, and lived in Pequannock Township, NJ. His marriage to Deen Kharbouch took place in 2007, but they separated in 2012 and officially divorced in 2014. The couple has a son born in October 2010.

In June 2018, Montana became an American citizen. He has had tigers as pets and currently has a pet monkey named Julius Ceasar due to the Roman's fondness for unusual animals. French Montana began his career as a battle rapper in the early 2000s under the name Young French. He co-founded the popular DVD series *Cocaine City* with his friend Cams. Despite being shot in the head outside a recording studio in the Bronx in 2003, French Montana persevered and released his first mixtape, *French Revolution Vol. 1*, in 2007. He also worked on mixtapes like *Coke Wave* and *Coke Wave 2* with rapper Max B. He formed a joint venture with Maybach Music Group in 2012 and signed with Bad Boy Records. French Montana has collaborated extensively with producer Harry Fraud throughout his career and has released numerous successful mixtapes and studio albums, including *Excuse My French* and *Jungle Rules*. His financial success has been boosted by hit singles like "Pop That" and "Unforgettable."

Due to his versatility, French Montana's career experienced a significant advancement. His breakthrough came in 2011 with the release of "Shot Caller," which gained considerable exposure on New York radio stations. This led to Diddy inviting French to collaborate on the official remix. French Montana also partnered with Maybach Music Group and signed with Bad Boy Records in 2011. In 2012, French Montana, along with Rick Ross and Drake, recorded the hit song "Stay Schemin." His debut studio album *Excuse My French* included the popular track "Pop That" featuring Ross, Drake, and Lil Wayne, released in 2013. Additionally, in 2014, he collaborated with Jennifer Lopez on the successful single "I Luh Ya Papi." 2018 saw French Montana team up with Drake for the Platinum-certified single "No Stylist" and release the song "Famous" with Adam Levine. The following year, he went on a successful tour and launched his third studio album, *Montana*, which included the hit "Writing on the Wall" featuring Cardi B, Post Malone, and Rvssian.

French worked with Pop Smoke, Tory Lanez, and Jack Harlow on the track "Twisted." Montana received favorable feedback for his song "Double G" with Young Thug and his album *Coke Wave 4* in 2021. He continues to release new music and collaborate with various artists while being at the height of his career.

French Montana has received many awards and honors during his career. In 2013, he was honored with BET Hip-Hop Awards for Best Collaboration, Duo, or Group for "Pop That" and in 2014 for Best Club Banger for "Don't Panic." He also won an iHeartRadio Music Award in 2016 for Hip Hop Song of the Year for "All the Way Up."

> "Once I dropped this record, everything connected. All that was missing was that hit single. And the mixtapes connected with the singles. The singles connected with the lifestyle. The lifestyle connected with the streets. It was one big snowball effect."

French Montana has been recognized for his achievements with nominations for various awards, such as a Grammy Award for Best Rap Album in 2015 for his album *Excuse My French* and a Grammy Award for Best Rap Song in 2016 for "Pop That." He also received an MTV Video Music Award for Best Hip-Hop Video in 2013 for the same song. Not only that, but French Montana has also been acknowledged as one of the top and most impactful rappers, being featured on lists like Complex's 50 Best Rappers of All Time and Billboard's 100 Greatest Hip-Hop Artists.

Music Connection: From Morocco, Africa to the Mecca of hip-hop to being internationally known as rap's top collaborative artists, take us back to the beginning when you first got started in this rap game.

French Montana: I came from Africa in '96, I was 13. I didn't speak no English, no nothing so, I remember dropping my first *Cocaine City* DVD in 2003. There was always a hurdle that didn't let us jump in the game. It was always that door locked in our face. It wasn't always about talent because everybody in New York raps. Everybody in New York wants to make it to hip-hop. The game is 99 percent hard work and 1 percent talent. It's because you have to find a way to get into the game; that's not normal like how the average person thinks. So you gotta be like 12 steps ahead of the game. Back then, there was a lot of artists that in order for them to be seen or heard, they had to be signed to DJs. It was this guy SmackDVD that just came out with DVDs and me and my guy was sitting down watching it one day. We was like, "Yo, we know all the drug dealers, we know all the rappers. Why don't we just go and just film and put me in the middle of it, exactly how the DJs do it." DJs used to put out iike a Fab freestyle in the middle of it. By the time you hear the third mixtape, you will be like, "damn, who is this kid?" That was a way for me to go through the window into the hip-hop game. People were looking for me after the third *Cocaine City* DVD. I kept on making music from like 2003 until like 2008. That's when I met Max B, around 2007-2008. The rest was history after that. I was more knowledgeable of the game. I knew the business a little better. I been through all of the ups and downs. I learned how to make music, doing the *Cocaine City* DVDs independently. There was a lot of downfalls and a lot of experience, and by the time I met Max B, we were the first ones to do CDs/DVDs. I took the *Cocaine City* DVDs and turned them into mixtape series with me and Max B. So we dropped *Coke Wave 1, 2,* and *3*. By the time we dropped *Coke Wave 3*, there wasn't no car in New York not bumpin us.

MC: Speaking of Max B, what does he mean to the rap game (to you).

FM: He's the wave god. He's the culture. He's somebody that is ahead of his time; from sing rap to swag. Everything to slang. I feel like he was so far ahead of the game, that people are just now catching up.

MC: What's the state of Max B?

FM: He's ready to come home.

MC: Tell us about the collaboration you did with Bad Boy and Maybach music.

FM: So after Max B gets locked up, I become like the most blackballed artist in the industry. I ended up getting with DJ Holiday for this mixtape called *Casino Life*. Then I locked in with Harry Fraud, and I still wasn't signed. Then I dropped, "Shot Caller." Once I dropped this record, everything connected. All that was missing was that hit single. And the mixtapes connected with the singles. The singles connected with the lifestyle. The lifestyle connected with the streets. It was one big snowball effect. And that's when Ross hit me up. Then I went to go see Ross. And Ross was trying to sign me, but he really didn't have the money to give me. So he said, "Lets call Puff and grab the money from him. And we can do a deal all 3 of us."

MC: To me, you're like the Quentin Tarantino of hip-hop because you collaborated with The Weeknd, Lil' Baby, Drake, Kanye West, just to name a few. How did you make these collaborations happen?

FM: Honestly, I just love music. I don't feel like there's enough hustle in the world that can get people that don't do things for money that work with you, you know? I feel like when I first got Drake on a record, it wasn't my record. Ross just invited me to the studio to work with him on the *Rich Forever* mixtape. I just went in there and did a verse and a hook. Then Ross asked Drake to be on his album, and Drake just so happen to pick the song that I'm on. He said that the hook and the singing parts were crazy. I follow my ears; and I follow a feeling that I have. If it doesn't move my soul, I can't [make it]. Because the moment you start shaking your head that you don't like something, there's gonna be something in me that's gonna say, "Yeah, I don't like it either." Like when I met up with Kanye, he got me my first Grammy nomination, as a producer. Or even working with Khaled. I go see Khaled, I do a hook. Next thing you know Khaled will hit me like, "Yo, Jay-Z just put a verse on it." So I was just blessed to work with the biggest artists in the game, just by laying down music and letting them do whatever they want to do with it. I feel like I always had a gift like that. The hardest video I had to do was putting Nas and Kanye together; after they both been in the game for so long. And here comes French Montana to get them both on a record together. Then after that, they went to do their first album together. But that came through me; they met through me.

MC: Tell us about 10K Projects and the handful of artists that you signed.

FM: Shout out to Kenzo B, shout out to Dthang, free Max B, Forever Chinx, shout out the Coke Boys. It's the movement. There's a bunch of brothers that get together to make some powerful music. So we got *Coke Boys 7* droppin next, after my album [*Mac & Cheese 5*]. Shout out to 10K; we just did the new deal, Coke Boys Entertainment with Dthang. And it's a beautiful thang.

MC: When it comes to collaborations, especially when you're on the road, what type of technology do you use to accommodate for yourself and for other artists?

FM: Sony mic and my computer. Pro Tools. That's about it. I don't try to make it too complicated.

MC: Tell us about your humanitarian efforts happening in Nigeria and Uganda. And how do you pay it forward.

FM: Uganda, Makoko, Morocco, Bronx, the list goes on. This is just part of being African and making it out the Motherland; going back to see how much our lives affect them. Basically, helping the people that can't help themselves. Especially, mothers and kids. Knowing that healthcare, it shouldn't be a privilege, it's a right. Just making sure that, you come to these peoples' aid, if you have a chance to. We gonna continue to work towards that. Shout out to Global Citizens. Shout out to everybody that played a big part. I was like the first global ambassador, as far as artists. I was the first rap artist to "ring the bell." It was a beautiful experience. And I hope that I can be able to do more.

MC: Speaking of Africa, where in Africa have you performed?

FM: I performed in South Africa and north Africa. I haven't performed in Uganda or Nigeria, but I'm looking forward to it.

MC: You're the number 1 streamed African artist with over 40 billion streams. How does that make you feel?

FM: I don't even care about things like that, you know? Having a diamond record or having three or four platinum albums, mixtapes, honestly, I'm blessed to have this sense of music; that's instilled in me. Every time I tap into it, something magical happens. That's something that nobody can take away from me. I made it out of nowhere with just that. It's faith and believing in my ear; believing that I have a gift. I feel like I can walk in anywhere, just be able to stand out on my own because I can hear something and I can feel something towards something that nobody else can. That's how I worked my way to Africa here. And into some of these big positions that I'm in. That's how I was able to buy my mother a house and help people, and just continue to strive. And have a decade long career; and continue to rise. Get better and better. When you're blessed with things like that, you shouldn't take them for granted.

MC: Where does your work ethic come from?

FM: It comes from being an immigrant. It comes from a place that we don't get the same opportunities. Watching my mother sacrifice, my father lose everything. It comes from a sad place. It's nothing wrong with it. It comes from experience. Experience is the best teacher you know? They say "broke parents, make strong kids." Rich parents, you know, you know what they say. So I'm glad that I was able to see my family have it, then not have it. They made me who I am as a man.

MC: Tell us about your autobiographical documentary, *For Khadija*.

FM: That's droppin this June;, if I'm not mistaken. It's a story about an immigrant mother with her kids and what she had to sacrifice and have faith and deal with obstacles. She didn't know English, she didn't know nothin. She believed her kids deserved the best, and you know, French Montana was made during those difficult times.

MC: Who are your top five artists of all time?

FM: Marvin Gaye, 2Pac, Biggie, Max B, Chinx.

MC: What's one piece of advice you would give to an up and coming artist and/or an artist struggling in the music game?

FM: Believe in yourself. And don't put your career in other people's hands. You wanna be mad at yourself for making the wrong decision, or happy with yourself for making the right ones. Always look out for yourself to help yourself. And that's what it is. Your best teacher is going to be experience. And have faith, and one thing that's better than anything, that I can ever tell you is, pray. Pray and hustle.

Quick Facts

- French was born in Morocco, Africa, but later grew up in the South Bronx, NY.
- French speaks Arabic and French fluently.
- French debuted his studio album, *Excuse My French* in 2013.
- French is a huge philanthropist; actively involved in charitable initiatives, specifically healthcare organizations and underprivileged communities.
- French is a loving father.
- French has a fragrance line called Angels' Share.

Hey! That's My Song!

Writing Songs for Film and TV

By Tracey and Vance Marino

The following is excerpted from the book Hey! That's My Song! *with permission by the authors and Rowan & Littlefield.*

HIT ME WITH YOUR BEST SHOT: THE INSTRUMENTATION MUST BE SPOT ON

What makes a genre a genre? The most obvious element is the instrumentation: Rock music has distorted guitars and powerful drums. Latin music has characteristic percussion instruments, like bongos, congas, and timbales. Hip-hop is all about the electronic drums. Is it possible to write and record a rock cue without distorted guitars? Yes, it is, but why would you want to work that hard? Most genres embrace instruments that are inherent to that style of music.

The listener should know within seconds of the start of the cue what kind of music it is, primarily due to the instrumentation. A two-second Dobro slide tells you you're in the southern United States. A koto strum tells you you're somewhere in Japan or perhaps an Asian restaurant. A church organ tells you you're, you guessed it, in a church or chapel.

Non-musicians who hear a rock cue might not be able to identify whether that sound is a Les Paul played through a cranked-up Marshall amp or a Stratocaster played through a Vox amp or even that it's a guitar at all, but they know it's a rock sound. Don't be afraid to use obvious instrumentation. It gets the message across.

As musicians, identifying instruments in a music recording should be one of the easier things you do. However, there are genres that use instruments with which you may not be familiar. Does that Latin cue have a shaker or a maraca? Or both? Or some other unique percussion instrument that's not as recognizable? Thankfully, you live in the Internet age, and these things can be researched. Depending on how authentic you need to be, you might find that some Latin styles always use a shaker and never a maraca, or the other way around. Use the resources that

are available to you to learn which instruments are typically used in various genres of music, especially ethnic styles.

A constant in instrumental cues is the use of orchestral strings and other orchestral elements. They are found in many cues, sometimes in pure orchestral form but often in combination with instruments from other genres (even hip-hop). Strings are combined frequently with synths and pads, which are synthesized sounds that fade in slowly and sustain. Keep your ears open.

FOR ALL WE KNOW

An in-depth knowledge of music theory is not necessary for you to be a skilled composer or songwriter, but it certainly helps broaden your musical palette. There are some who are very successful but have an incomplete understanding of the intricacies of music and its terminology. However, the goal here is to shed light on the subjects involved in creating and marketing your music for sync and illuminate your path to success. In addition to aiding in the composing and songwriting process, understanding the language of music is very helpful when communicating with other musicians, producers, and engineers. This knowledge is also beneficial when encountering musical terminology in recording equipment and software.

You are encouraged to learn more about how the beautiful sounds of music come together to create an emotional response in a listener.

HERE IT IS IN BLACK AND WHITE

Music theory makes sense when it is expressed in terms of looking at the notes on a piano keyboard. It is not necessary to be a keyboardist, but knowing visually how the notes are laid out is advantageous.

In the music production world, an electronic keyboard is more convenient than an actual piano, for many reasons:

- It will work with the recording software.
- It never goes out of tune.
- You may use several different sounds rather than only a piano sound.
- It makes editing much easier.

THE BLANK CANVAS AND SELECTING YOUR MUSICAL PALETTE

Like a painter who has chosen the colors on their palette, once you know what instruments to use, the next step is to focus on the music itself. Does music in the genre you are writing use major scales? Minor scales? Pentatonic scales? Modes? What about the chords? Majors? Minors? Open fifths? Or perhaps no clearly defined chords but notes and harmonies that imply chords? You could try to write a jazz cue with only major and minor chords and scales, but it won't sound very authentic. The complexity of the chords and scales in jazz make it sound jazzy. It's very important to compose your music to sound like the genre in which you're writing.

How are the instrumentation and music put together to create a vibe? A rock band made up of drums, bass, and two electric guitars playing open fifth chords and minor pentatonic scales can create different vibes. A fast tempo, with everybody pounding on their instruments, can create an exciting or frenetic vibe, while the same band at a slower tempo with a shuffle groove, and everybody playing fewer notes at a lower volume, can create a more subdued or laidback vibe. Tempo and intensity are important things to consider in creating a feel.

Attitude is another thing to think about. Music that is played or sung off pitch or out of time has an effect on the listener. In this digital recording world you may have a tendency to "fix" everything you record. However, leaving the raw performance as it was recorded may actually give you the vibe for which you're looking. Some scenes call for music that will make the viewer uncomfortable, and this is one way to achieve that result.

MELODIES, RIFFS, AND MOTIFS—OH, MY!

As is often the case with any artistic endeavor, there's no one rule to follow when writing melodies for sync music instrumentals. The nature of melodies is frequently genre-dependent. Some genres use melodies that are very similar to songs, while others use short musical motifs instead of melodies. This is another thing to note when researching a genre.

For instance, Caribbean music features, characteristically, a prominent steel drum melody. In addition to using major scales, the melodies in this genre use syncopated rhythms and are very hooky. They may start with an eight-note melody, repeat it with a variation, contrast with three long notes, and then repeat the first melody, ending on a tonic note. Later in the piece, a steel drum harmony in thirds may be added, as this is commonplace in this style.

STILL THE SAME: SCORING POINTS WITH THE MUSIC EDITOR

A good rule in sync music is to always keep tempo and key consistent, with no changes throughout. It's also a good idea to have clear delineations between the sections of the piece. These are called edit points and will occasionally include a very short silence to make it easier for the music editor to work with your music.

A music editor puts (syncs) your music together with the video of a show. Anything you can do to make the music editor's job easier will increase your placement opportunities. Why? Because the music editors are often the ones making the final decision about which piece of music is used. Regarding instrumentals,

- Use the same key throughout the instrumental piece.
- Keep the tempo and groove consistent throughout the piece so the sections sound cohesive.
- Don't change the overall vibe.
- Bring instruments in or out, making sure their entrances are not jolting.
- Avoid drastic changes within a piece.

DON'T GO OVERBOARD WHEN WRITING CUES

Many years ago, a music publisher emphatically told us, "You guys are writing too much! There's no need to overwrite. Ever!" This was career-changing advice for us; he had thrown us a musical life preserver.

The takeaway? We learned that a two-minute piece of music did not require composing two actual minutes of music! What?? "That's right," the publisher said. "Write less, arrange more." We took his advice and started writing eight-bar A sections and then repeated the A sections with interesting arrangement variations. We were amazed how seemingly simple but challenging this technique was—yet very effective in the end.

HEY! READ THIS!

So, how long does it take to write a two-minute instrumental cue? Longer than two minutes. When we started writing music for sync, it took us three weeks to finish a two-minute cue. Really. Of course, we had a lot to learn about composing, arranging, recording, producing, and mixing. Now it takes us about six to eight hours to finish one in a genre with which we are familiar. If it's a new style for us, or if we're using new software, it takes longer. Composers each work at their own pace. Streamlining the process and being familiar with your tools is essential. The important thing is that the final product must be top-notch and usable.

I'LL TAKE "MUSIC GENRES" FOR $500, PLEASE

People are accustomed to thinking about music in terms of its genre, such as hip-hop, rock, country, blues, soul, pop, or jazz. In the world of sync music, in addition to genre, think about how the music will be placed. Songs and instrumentals of these genres are used in films and TV shows. However, composers and songwriters of sync music frequently consider the end use of their music while it is being created. These uses include music for commercials, movie trailers, sports, news, dramas, video games, reality cable TV shows, and music that identifies geographic locations. Music written for these purposes may incorporate elements of the genres mentioned above, but they are handled differently. Here are some typical characteristics of music written for these uses:

- Commercials. Music written specifically for commercials is likely to be happy, upbeat, and in a major key, with positive, optimistic song lyrics and themes.
- Movie trailers. Trailers consistently follow a three-part visual formula—an intro, a buildup, and a climax—so the music that is composed must follow the same formula: intro, buildup, and climax.
- The finished trailer may contain one cue from start to finish, or a different cue may be used for each of the three sections.
- In many cases, bits and pieces from dozens of cues may be included in the final version.
- The composition should not be complicated. Simple music that is not highly melodic is best; the challenge lies in the production and mixing, which must be top-level.
- This is not to say that trailer cues are easy to write. The goal is to make simple music sound interesting for two to three minutes while following the formula and incorporating acoustic and electronic

sounds. A common request for music in trailers is that it sound "epic."

- Sports. Viewers of sports programming expect high-energy, intense music that fits the competitive attitude of their games. Aggressive styles, such as rock, hip-hop, orchestral, or a combination of these, are standard in accompanying sports. This music is not for the timid.
- News. Music for news is typically a combination of electronic and orchestral elements. Brass and strings make it sound very important and serious. Mid-to-up-tempo cues bring the urgency required.
- Tension. This is a very broad category. It frequently combines elements of electronic, orchestral, hip-hop, and rock. It's often in a minor key and creates tension via dissonant harmonies and pulsing beats.
- Video games. Most of the music in video games is written by a composer. However, depending on the subject and length of the game, the rest may be licensed. As with many dramatic movies and TV shows, the score composer for a video game does not usually write songs with lyrics for the project.
- Because of the varying lengths of the scenes in video games, the music is written specifically so that it can be looped: the end of the cue should seamlessly lead back to the beginning. This way, the same music can accompany a short scene or a long scene. If you write music for video games, it is imperative that you actually play video games.
- Scene-setter or location music. When a story moves to a new location, a change in the music and images lets the viewer know that the characters are in a different place. This is known as scenesetter music. Using instrumentation that is commonly associated with the geographic location, as well as musical scales, harmonies, and rhythms that are characteristic in music from the region are important factors in composing effective music.

PRO TIPS *About Writing Instrumentals for Sync*

I mostly compose the underscore for various projects. When I write tracks for a production music library, the two most helpful tips have been on two levels: First, regarding the structure of my composition, I use song form A–A–B–A, where I compose the A theme and two more fleshed-out variations, then a contrasting B theme. Second, I keep the music focused on one emotion/tone (each track needs to focus on one emotion and develop it over two minutes). The B theme needs to be in the same overall vein but not too different.

– Penka Kouneva,
Composer for film, TV, and video games

For me personally, the impact of getting sync licensing for my music has been immense. I have always been an artist before anything, so ultimately licensing has just helped put more of a light on my art, and it has financially enabled me to have the flexibility and fuel to keep making and releasing that art independently.

– Katie Herzig,
Artist, Songwriter, and Producer

The most important criterion for music to be considered for sync, in my opinion, is sticking to a singular emotion for a cue. Make it easier for a music editor to fit it into a scene. Music should be functional and not self-serving. Your job is to support the scene and define the emotion. It should never be, "Hey! Look at me!"

– Steve Barden,
Composer and Author

Don't send reality TV underscore tracks to a boutique trailer library, and don't send music for commercials to a reality TV library, and so on. A lot of the really successful writers in production music write music with a specific intent and purpose and can tell you immediately what that was.

– Derek Jones,
Director of Creative Services at Megatrax Production Music

ARC OF A DIVER: HOW DEEP IS YOUR SONG?

A common request from music supervisors is a trailerized version of a familiar song. As mentioned earlier, this is usually an epic, over-the-top, moody, or dramatic treatment of a song and may include edgy sound throughout. Conversely, the song could be a stripped-down version with haunting vocals, eerie synth pads, and in a minor key. Perhaps it could be an arrangement done in a completely different genre. Interesting spins on a song include taking a rock song and turning it into a simple ukulele track or taking a simple folk song and making it a punk rock anthem. The possibilities are endless.

Before recording a cover song—or trailerizing it—find out all you can about the song and the people who created it. What's the song's story? This is known as doing a "deeper dive," and it can affect how you interpret the song, bringing it to another level.

To begin diving into the song, watch and read interviews, search the Internet, find background information, and discover all you can about the song's history:

- How did the song come to be, and why?
- Who wrote and produced it?
- How did the artist's (or band's) style and musicianship affect the song?
- What was happening locally, or in the world, that may have affected the song's creation?
- Were the songwriters going through a life-changing event that inspired them to write the song?
- Which other artists and bands have covered the song? (Many established and up-and-coming artists post their covers on streaming platforms.)
- After doing research, why do you think this song resonates with artists—and, more importantly, the listeners?
- Does this song get sync placements and if so, in which media, typically?
- How will you put your own spin on the melody, chords, arrangement, and production, and will these elements bring a new meaning or a different emotional quality to the song? (This separates a good rendition of a song from an amazing one.)

PRO TIPS *About Writing Songs for Sync*

Choose an attention-grabbing title. My most successful sync song, "Show Me the Honey," written to a track by Sharron March, has gotten more than 20 major placements, including *Scrubs*, *Friday Night Lights, Kickin' It Old Skool*, and *Assassination Games*. I have no doubt that the unique title played a big role in that song's success.

– Jason Blume,
Emmy®-winning Hit Songwriter and Author

I go to a beautiful place and make up songs into my iPhone video. That is the "El Blurto" phase. Then I look at them later with coffee and a yellow pad.

– Jack Tempchin,
Writer of "Peaceful Easy Feeling,"
Member of the Songwriters Hall of Fame

Songs in media only have a few seconds to establish themselves so the viewer understands what feeling the music is contributing to a scene. If you are making songs for media, be sure that within five seconds it expresses a specific vibe: Female Pop, Indie Rock, Retro Funk, Dirt Road Blues, etc. And then nail that vibe with authenticity.

– John Houlihan,
Music Supervisor

Write what you know. If you've never been on a "Freight Train to Nowhere," don't write about it.

– Steve Dorff,
2018 Inductee to the Songwriters Hall of Fame

Songwriting has really helped me both be flexible and stubborn! You've got to be willing to pivot, change, and rearrange ideas like a puzzle—and also wait and protect those magical moments or hooks that are undeniably moving or good. It's a balance between the two. As someone who is very stream-of-consciousness in the way I create, capturing a good idea is half the trick.

– Katie Herzig,
Artist, Songwriter, and Producer

Lyrically, let the story and the imagery be provided by the filmmaker, not the songwriter. Specifics belong to the emotional impact, not to the visuals. But a nifty way around this is the metaphorical, symbolic use of imagery. Play with the "shape" of melodies, and vary them in chunks of melody (motifs). I love making games or experiments out of the writing process. Try out the phrase "What if?" Throw in a surprise. – ***Lisa Aschmann,***
Songwriter and Author, Nashville Geographic

There are always more things to learn. If I ever had a "light bulb moment," it would've been realizing that there is a place for almost any type/genre of quality music in the music for media space.

– Matt Hirt, Composer,
Songwriter, and Producer,
and Co-owner of Catapult Music

I make sure a song for sync is the best it can be—and that the melody is heard. I think of a song as a beat and a vocal; those two things drive the song. They make your foot tap, your head nod, and you want to sing along.

– Brian Scheuble,
Mixer

Audeze MM-100 Professional Headphones

Audeze just released the MM-100 Professional Headphones, the most affordable professional headphones the company has ever released. I recently had a chance to talk with Peter James, Audeze' s marketing director, to get his insights on the MM-100 and why it is a breakthrough product.

Music Connection: I understand the MM-100 is the most affordable professional headphone Audeze has ever released. You mentioned that the MM-100 is a big step forward in democratizing the Audeze brand for a much wider audience, especially in the pro audio market. Can you elaborate on that point a bit?
Peter James: This is the first time we have offered a full-size Audeze headphone with the same driver size as the more mainstream headphones at this level of an accessible price point. The closest parallel to the MM-100 in the Audeze product lineup would be our LCD-1. Because the LCD-1 is smaller, it had to have some compromises to the performance relative to our bigger driver headphones. So, from that point of view, this is the first full-size Audeze headphone has offered at an affordable price point built to the same level of quality as all our other headphone products.

The MM-100 has the same open-back planar-magnetic heritage as all our LCD-1, and of course in this case, the MM-500 which we reviewed back in *Music Connection*'s August 2022 edition. Talking to somebody like Manny Marroquin, you really get the sense of how his vision brought this headphone to life, which was that it could be a high quality pair of headphones that could be affordable to all young people, creators, people just getting started out in, making music, or getting started out in a music career, so that they'd have access to a really accurate, neutral-sounding device that could tell them the truth about what they're putting down in their tracks.

MC: Can you give me a little bit of background on what Manny Marroquin's input was in the development of the MM-100 and what he does for Audeze?
PJ: Manny is, technically speaking, the head of our pro-audio division. For years he's been using a few of our other models and when we started developing the MM-500, he was involved with listening to a number of different prototypes and trying them out, commenting on the sound, saying what he liked, what he didn't like, what he might want to try and get out of it. The goal was that he was satisfied with the headphones from the standpoint that he knew that he could mix a whole track, or even an entire album on the headphones, pull up the tracks in the studio on his monitors, and not need to change a thing. With the MM-100, the goal was to try and keep as much of that accuracy and goodness while making a more affordable product.

Manny had a lot of involvement in listening and, evaluating the MM-100 as it was developed as were some of the other folks around his studio, Larrabee Studios who have used and experienced both the MM-100 and MM-500, giving us feedback about it. It felt like in testing the MM-100, that it did carry through Manny's vision of a pair of headphones that you could mix a record on them if you needed to. In developing the MM-100, we were trying to maintain as much of that sound characteristic of the MM-500 as possible.

MC: Can you tell me a little bit about what compromises your design team had to make to make the MM-100 affordable?
PJ: A lot of that is due to the technology built into our Maxwell gaming headphones. Like the Maxwell, The MM-100 was designed to be mass produced, more cheaply and efficiently, whereas the MM-500 has a bit more complex assembly required and has some high-end machined aluminum parts and things of that nature that just naturally drive up the price quite a bit.

In terms of the driver structure, the main difference between the two headphones is that the MM-100 has a slightly weaker magnetic field. And, you know, what that means is that the MM-100 headphone is slightly less efficient than the MM-500, so it takes a little bit more power than the MM-500. As a result, that magnetic field is not as strong, it does not have quite as necessarily tight control of the driver as, say, the MM-500 does.

The MM-100 are what I would consider a classic pair of headphones equally at home for live or studio use. The MM-100 can serve as a workhorse that can be used as your daily go-to headphones for tracking and mixing and monitoring. The MM-100 is designed to cut through the mix and allow the musicians and engineers to hear every element separately in exceptional detail as compared to what you hear from most standard dynamic driver type headphones currently on the market.

To sum it up If you are like a lot of people and can only afford one pair of professional quality headphones, the MM-100 may well be a significant step up from what you are currently using, especially if you are shopping in the sub-$500 price point category.

The Audeze MM-100 Professional Headphones are available now for MAP $399. Find out more at audeze.com/products/mm-100

Mackie Showbox

Mackie's new Showbox is an all-in-one portable PA or as Mackie calls it, Performance Rig.

Mackie has considerable experience designing portable battery powered PA's going back to the Mackie Thump and they have taken all that experience into account in designing the Mackie Showbox. Let me say right up front that the Mackie Showbox is a veritable Swiss army knife of a portable PA. It's packed with far more onboard features and as good or better specs than any other portable PA price in its price category.

The Mackie Showbox is designed to combine all the functionality of a portable PA, Acoustic Guitar Amp, six-channel mixer, effects rack, a USB-C interface, combined into a single, rugged and portable device. Mackie Showbox can be mounted on a pole plus the shape is wedged, so you can lay it on the ground. The Mackie Showbox has a recessed handle making it easy for just about anyone to move around with one hand. Mackie Showbox is designed to comfortably fit in the backseat of your car and can be carried in a padded backpack which Mackie sells separately. The Mackie Showbox is built very sturdily and is designed to withstand daily bumps and grinds you might encounter. At just under 20" tall and 12" wide and weighing just under 21 pounds the Mackie Showbox is designed for easy portability.

Mackie Showbox has two XLR, and two guitar inputs plus a stereo input. It also has an effect send for looping in an effect pedal such as a reverb compressor or delay. A 1/8-inch aux jack is provided to plug in devices like a phone or an iPad, it also has a USB-C interface built in to live stream your gig or record the audio onto your phone. There is also an XLR balanced mix out, so you could connect to another speaker without any noise through longer cable runs.

The heart of the Mackie Showbox is an on board Class D digital amplifier that is rated at 400 watts peak, which makes it perfect for small indoor or outdoor gigs. Its lithium-ion battery takes about three-four hours to fully charge. An on board battery charge indicator keeps you advised on your remaining battery time. Per Mackie, you should get five-six hours of continuous use off a single charge, more than enough for a typical gig. For larger venues, or if you're using Showbox as an onstage amp or monitoring system you can plug into the IEC mains outlet and connect to the front of house via the XLR Mix output.

Showbox features a unique breakaway mix control panel which can be mounted on a mic stand. The control panel connects to the Showbox via an included Ethernet cable and gives you full hand on control. The breakaway panel can be mounted on a pole or Mic Stand and connects to the main unit via an included (Mackie green!) Ethernet Cable.

The Mackie Showbox has six inputs (five 1/8-inch TRS Mono inputs one Stereo inputs for a total of six inputs). You get six effects as well as an effects loop for connecting your own effect pedals, amp sim, etc.

Mackie Showbox allows you to connect two individual effects to run each channel. You can select from a list of available effects including chorus delay fuzz, flanger, phaser, tube amp emulation, tremolo or acoustic guitar. Reverb options include plate, room, hall or spring. The onboard three-band parametric EQ available on each channel has high, peaking mid and low pass shelving controls.

To address most of the common feedback related issues you might typically encounter on your gigs, The Mackie Showbox has selectable indoor and outdoor modes and a built in feedback eliminator which will address most common feedback related issues.

Another cool feature is when the incoming signal exceeds the threshold exceeds the set gain level its automatically compressed which reduces the dynamic range and reduces the chance of unwanted distortion.

You can easily record your gigs by connecting a microSD card into the provided card slot, or livestream straight from your smartphone with the built-in USB-C interface. You can record the audio by itself. There is also a headphone output so you can monitor your mix.

Showbox has a built in auto-gain feature borrowed from Mackie's DLZ Creator podcast solution which is a great feature to have when setting your input levels. Whether you're a beginner or have experience in correctly setting gain levels, the auto gain feature is great to have especially if you are in hurry to get set up and start your gig.

The Mackie Showbox has built in Bluetooth I/O which makes it easy to hook up your backing tracks to playback during your gigs. It also has switchable PA and switchable indoor and outdoor amp voicing modes as well as Internal effects for processing guitar and vocals.

The takeaway here is that with the Showbox, Mackie has designed a well thought out portable PA that really does deliver what many musicians or singer songwriter will need on a typical gig. Like all the other Mackie products I've reviewed over the years the Mackie Showbox offers a substantial value proposition. The Mackie showbox is very much a real world solution and is designed to simplify your live setup and includes a host of on board useful extras you will not find on any other portable PSA in this price category. If you are a singer-songwriter or solo gigging musician, the Mackie Showbox is a worthwhile investment.

The Mackie Showbox is available now for MAP $799. Find out more at mackie.com/en/products/battery-powered/live_sound/showbox.html

The Sound of A.I. in Hollywood

Actors and writers reached their agreement with A.I. What about sound designers?

After some long and painful fights, the issue of A.I.—at least for actors and writers—has been resolved. For the rest of us in Hollywood, however, the unpacking of A.I. has only just begun. Navigating the future of the sound design industry will depend on engineers and editors understanding how to maximize the capability and productivity of A.I. tools.

While filmmaking and production were shut down for most of the year by the long and painful strike, the industry of Hollywood has continued to churn. Though the "Barbenheimer" craze over the summer cushioned the economic blow for some studios, the last six months have seen major Hollywood studios bend over backward to improve profitability.

Studios direct-to-consumer offerings—streamers—have borne the brunt of these efforts; in this grand experimentation, everything from storytelling structure to pricing models have been on the table. Streamers have merged, shifted, and cut entire projects in an attempt to impress investors with their bottom line.

It's a reasonable concern, then, that having failed with the actors and writers, other, less powerful and more technical groups—such as sound engineering—may be on the line for A.I. replacement and the presumed associated cost savings. And it's not necessarily a wild leap: it's inevitable that A.I. will, as with other industries, dramatically shift what the workflow for sound engineers will look like.

Sound engineers looking to forge their future not only during these tumultuous times in Hollywood, but also in the "civilian" sector, need to be smart about how they deploy A.I. There are already tools available that can help us speed up our processes and projects. Two good examples:

▪ **Sound cataloging and library management:** Finding a specific sound in a sound library can be an incredibly time intensive process. I know that my own library is made up of over two terabytes of various sounds, and digging through it to find a specific one can take hours. There are A.I. tools on the market that can not only uncover a sound, but also generate timestamps inside each audio clip.

▪ **Audio description mixing:** Mixing for audio description can be a rote process. Clients have specifications they want met, and save for a bit of artistry, the process is fairly straightforward. A program's audio needs to drop at a certain point before the narratives begin, and resume shortly after it ends. A.I. can automate the process, doing an effective first draft of the work, creating time for the engineer to check and fix any mixing issues after the first rendering.

As in other industries, these tools offer methods of speeding up delivery and service, and will eventually become the standard practice. As cost savings continue to be a major priority for studios, expect to see A.I. technologies implemented to a greater and greater extent.

But will sound engineers face an existential crisis as a result of A.I.?

Yes—and no.

As the more basic tasks of sound design—such as sound effects cataloging and audio description mixing—are outsourced to A.I. tools, other novice positions, like interns and PA roles, will likely dry up. If companies can find cost savings by using technology, they will, and the impact will likely be fewer roles for individuals just getting started and learning the business.

At the same time, sound design—like many other post-production positions—is both an art and a science. The best among us have the technical skills needed to create a cohesive soundscape, while also having the artful ear that can create a character out of the audio. Part of being a sound designer is having the ability to translate a director's vision into a rich and immersive sound experience.

In an industry that runs on connections and creativity, removing the position of sound engineer likely won't happen, especially at the highest levels. Certainly, the lower tier and newer streaming services—those who are just creating content for content's sake—may turn to some emerging A.I. tools to churn out fast, good enough sound designs that simply gets the job done. As TikTok and TikTok-like mini productions grow in popularity, rapid turnaround will be prioritized over quality.

But there will continue to be a happy medium for sound design and engineering. Work in this industry long enough, and you know that relationships are everything. Directors are on the lookout for partners who have the emotional sensibility and creativity to translate their vision, add to it, and produce something even better.

The Oscar-winning directors of the world aren't likely to give up that relationship soon, attached as they are to the individuals who help to drive the creative process alongside them. Similarly, independent artists and filmmakers, who are driven by creativity and passion, aren't likely to pursue ease over art.

Soft skills will still win the day for sound designers, but smart studios can, and will, start bracing themselves for an A.I.-driven future.

DAVID ZANG is the owner of AsparTate-Sounds in Los Angeles. He is an award-winning re-recording mixer, a sound editor, and a location sound mixer. Feel free to reach out to David on his website, aspar-taterecords.com

A Bad Think

Cottonwood

Windmark Records

Producers: Michael Marquat, Dave Way

8

Michael Marquart's A Bad Think has released their 12th record, *Cottonwood*, this time produced with the Dolby Atmos mix from Dave Way, a development that Marquart will not have any other way. This immersive mix (which can be enjoyed on AirPods) greatly enhances the breezy folk-rock sound A Bad Think has embraced. "Am I Ok?" is Pink Floyd-coded, atmospheric and solitary, opening by asking "Is anybody out there?" "Good For Now" is most upbeat, emulating Marquat's Flock of Seagulls days. **– *Joseph Maltese***

The Hangmen

Stories to Tell

Acetate Records

Producers: Rob Schnapf, Andy Carpenter

8

The Hangmen have done it again with their 7th studio album, *Stories to Tell.* Raw guitars and vocals pave the way for unpretentious lyrics that delve into every day life. Superb production coupled with great musicianship makes for some great rock 'n' roll. Outlaw-ish and sad in theme, even the ballads are unapologetic. With hints of blues, country and catchy hooks, this record has a little bit of something for everyone. If you were driving down Route 66 at 100 miles an hour, you'd have the top down and blasting this record. **– *Pierce Brochetti***

Jeff Aug

Kiss of the Liquid Moon

Heavy Progressive Records

Producer: Murat Parlak

8

Aug hails from the East Coast but lives in Germany and is a very active touring artist throughout Europe. He is a guitarist that spans the gamut from fusion to country blues. But if you're a fan of acoustic soloists like Michael Hedges, Paco DeLucia and Leo Kottke, this instrumental album is for you. His finger style picking seems rooted in classical and bluegrass traditions, but there are some Mediterranean and other exotic modes and mediums at play as well. Relax and set your mind adrift. **– *Eric Harabadian***

Justin Timberlake

Everything I Thought It Was

RCA

Producers: Justin Timberlake, Timbaland

7

After a six-year hiatus, Justin Timberlake returns to the limelight with *Everything I Thought It Was*. His sixth studio album features his long-time producer, Timbaland, and his former bandmates from NSYNC. "Memphis" feels like a throwback to his heyday in the early 2000s, when the crooner would often use hip-hop style vocal melodies over R&B. Timberlake shows off his falsetto in "Technicolor," a love song with classic adlibs by Timbaland. Meanwhile, "Sanctified" feels like the standout track from the LP. **– *Miguel Costa***

Mergui

Shadows of Blue

Saban Music Partners

Producers: Mergui, K-Kov, Varo, Haim Saban

8

Mergui sounds like a stripped-down boy band with beautifully written songs that tug at the heart's strings and make you miss that real love you once knew. Gorgeous vocals surround mellow, bluesy and R&B pop tracks to bring you the best heart-break has to offer. The first track, "Happy Now," leaves you wanting so much more and the last track, "Look Easy," well, it just gives it to you. With lyrics like, "Sirens Warning, Skies Pouring, Thunders Calling But I'll Stand My Ground," and a superb production team, this crooner is sure to be a big hit. **– *Pierce Brochetti***

Jesse Lynn Madera

Speed of Sound

Self-released

Prod: Dan Navarro, Jim Scott, Ryan Hadlock

8

Speed of Sound is the second album released by West Virginian singer-songwriter Jesse Lynn Madera. The lead single (and album opener), "Austin," is anthemic, a rock-leaning full-band-splaying track that gets our "hips moving to the song on the radio." "Last Call," a duet with co-writer Dan Navarro, is sung entirely in harmony and is reminiscent of some of the folk pop golden age of the '60s and '70s. Nostalgia for Americana's yesteryear makes Madera a prime choice for summertime playlists around the firepit. **– *Joseph Maltese***

Kandace Springs

Run Your Race

SRP Records, LLC

Producers: Kandace Springs, Carl Sturken, Evan Rogers

8

The top story from Kandace Springs' latest release is the outstanding cover of "What Was I Made For?," Billie Eilish's heart-wrencher from the *Barbie* soundtrack. Springs' rich voice, airy and emotive, serves the song well with only soft jazz piano chords to accompany. *Run Your Race* opens with the title track, slow and pensive, optimistic, but downtrodden. The album is filled with these tragically beautiful reflections ("So Far, So Near," "Closer to Me," "Broken Keys"), all inspired by the recent loss of Springs' father. **– *Joseph Maltese***

Mount Kimbie

The Sunset Violet

Warp Records

Producers: Dominic Maker, Kai Campos, Dilip Harris

8

This self-produced LP begins with an instrumental track influenced by shoegaze called "The Trail" before leading their listeners into an indie-pop duet titled "Dumb Guitar." Other highlights include an electric rock song with elements of downtempo called "Boxing." It features a guest appearance from King Krule and reverb that makes the vocals ring out. On "A Figure In The Surf," the guys display their penchant for songwriting with mixture of post-punk and industrial dance music. **– *Miguel Costa***

To be considered for review in the Album Reviews section, you must have a record deal with a major label or an independent label with an established distributor. If you do not, please see our New Music Critiques section.

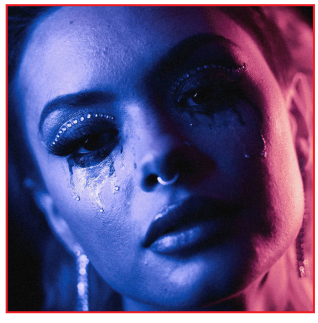
The Hasbros

Contact: thehasbrosnyc@gmail.com
Web: thehasbros.com
Seeking: Film/TV Placement, Label, Booking, Distribution
Style: Pop-Punk, Pop

Production 7
Lyrics 7
Music 8
Vocals 7
Musicianship 8

SCORE: 7.4

Oh, there's a lot of fun to be had here, though it's tempered with no small amount of appropriate cynicism and some good old fashioned angst. The Hasbros are a Queens, NY band that play with alt-indie-power-pop-punk tropes, but they have the chops and the songwriting chops to carry it off. The likes of the Replacements, early REM, Soul Asylum and Weezer raise their pained, melodic heads at various points on songs such as "Conspiracy Theory," as the Hasbros toy with your emotions (see what we did there?). The band has opened for the Spin Doctors and They Might Be Giants, which makes all the sense in the world.



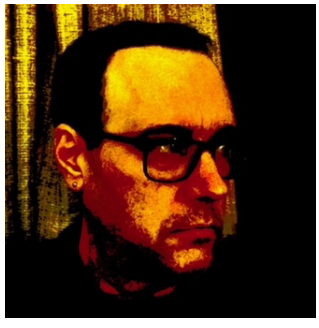
Wrené

Contact: iamwrene@gmail.com
Web: wrene.bandcamp.com
Seeking: Review
Style: Avant-pop, Alt-Pop, Indie Electronic, Industrial

Production 9
Lyrics 9
Music 8
Vocals 9
Musicianship 8

SCORE: 8.6

Sometimes you just have to sit back and let the music wash over you. Toronto artist Wrené offers the sort of musical experience that will tie you up in emotional knots and have you thanking her for it. "Her fearless exploration of unconventional soundscapes and intimate vocals create an entirely new sound coming out of Toronto's music scene," reads her Bandcamp bio, which is a beautifully succinct way of wording the traumatic/comforting journey that she takes you on. Wrené makes it her mission to beak the listener, and then put them back together again. Frankly, we're exhausted yet ready to dive in again.



Genre Peak

Contact: genrepeak1@yahoo.com
Web: genrepeak.net
Seeking: Film/TV
Style: Electronic

Production 8
Lyrics X
Music 8
Vocals X
Musicianship 7

SCORE: 7.6

Genre Peak is a project created by electronic/ambient composer Martin Birke, and the latest album *Gnosis* features collaborations with Steve Jansen, Mick Karn, Richard Barbieri, Jon Hassell, Matt Malley, Tara C. Taylor and many more. Birke describes the eight tracks as "cinematic soundscapes," which hits the nail on the head. These instrumental tunes are lush and meditative, massaging the mind with an expert touch. The melodies are subtle—you won't find yourself humming these in the car afterwards. But the listening experience is quite magnificent, transcendental in fact, and one could easily imagine these songs scoring a movie.

Joshy Grey

Contact: nataliabogucka@yahoo.com
Web: Spotify
Seeking: Booking, Film/TV, Exposure
Style: Hip-Hop, Rap

Production 8
Lyrics 8
Music 7
Vocals 8
Musicianship 7

SCORE: 7.6

There's something disconcertingly calm about Joshy Grey's vocal style. The man's even keel as he recites the stories of his life is gloriously effective. "You need to relax, why you so mad? Is it the fact that you were exposed," he raps on the brilliant "Coming Back," highlighting his "the world is on fire but everybody just chill" vibe. "All I Ever Need" is better still; atmospheric, echoing piano frame a song that builds and builds, climaxing with a chant-like, infectious chorus. The songs is simultaneously haunting and anthemic, a tough blend to pull off. There are apparently many shades of Grey, and all of them are absolutely compelling.

Water Street

Contact: paulsondavid49@gmail.com
Web: waterstreetofficial.com
Seeking: Review, Film/TV
Style: Pop-Rock

Production 7
Lyrics 8
Music 9
Vocals 8
Musicianship 8

SCORE: 8.0

New Jersey Americana-tinged pop-rock band Water Street are, according to brilliant track "People," just trying to be people. They can consider that task accomplished, because there's a wonderful "regular folk" vibe to Water Street's music that is reminiscent of Billy Joel and, more recently, Bleachers. It's a subtle "anti-rock star" thing; these guys probably found each other on a street, presumably Water Street, and just started making music on a porch. If that's not true, it feels like it is. More importantly, the hooks and performances are fantastic. "Summer Rose" is a sweet ballad, but they let loose a little on "People" and "Collateral," to their immense benefit.

Cinders

Contact: cindersmusic@gmail.com
Web: cindersmusic.com
Seeking: Booking
Style: Alt-Rock, Pop

Production 8
Lyrics 7
Music 9
Vocals 8
Musicianship 8

SCORE: 8.0

Salt Lake City trio Cinders' newest EP, *Going Nowhere*, is an aperitif to hold fans over after their last 2021 full-length. Longtime friends Montana Smith (vocals, guitar), Adrian De La Cruz (bass), and Brad Bennett (drums) have undeniable chemistry as a unit, spewing energy, emotion and honesty with an electric blend of alt-rock and pop. "Don't Wait Up" is co-produced by Mike Sapone (Taking Back Sunday, The Front Bottoms), which, combined with their supporting roles touring with Ritt Momney and Sub-Radio, is the exact pocket the band needs to be in. Lighthearted loud rock is alive and the lane is clear for Cinders to play to bigger audiences and keep the momentum going!

Music Connection's executive committee rates recorded music on a scale of 1 to 10. Number 1 represents the lowest possible score, 10 represents the highest possible score.
A final score of 7 denotes a solid, competent artist. For more information, see Submission Guidelines on the next page.

DownTown Mystic

Contact: lcollins@milestonepublicity.com
Web: downtownmystic.net
Seeking: Film/TV
Style: Rock 'n' Roll

With over 240 TV show placements and global radio airplay, DownTown Mystic continues to solidify its status as a leading independent artist and composer. DownTown Mystic's latest album, *Rock'n'Roll 4 The Soul*, channels the essence of American rock 'n' roll, drawing inspiration from Tom Petty and Bruce Springsteen. Spearheaded by Robert Allen, the album even boasts a stellar lineup including renowned musicians like Steve Holley and Paul Page, alongside Max Weinberg and Garry Tallent of the E Street Band. With trusted storytelling lyrics and analog recording techniques, each track resonates with depth and authenticity.

Production	8
Lyrics	7
Music	8
Vocals	8
Musicianship	9

SCORE: 8.0

X

Contact: randyschooltour@gmail.com
Web: Instagram.com/therealofficialX
Seeking: Label
Style: Pop, R&B

All-female pop/R&B group X (we do wonder if the name could lead to confusion and even legal trouble) are new to the scene, though when the music speaks for itself, the talent and the whole package would suggest they are ready for their takeoff any minute. The members: Lexi Ashlyn, Angelica Hart, Briana Rhinehart, Ricara Daniels, and Sabrina Hart, complement each other as friends (and sisters), and have studied their predecessors well in Chloe x Halle, Danity Kane and TLC. What a hook on "Chasin!" "We're steady chasin' love," the harmonies and layered vocal runs are gorgeous! But X has edge! With any group, the members establish their roles, which include verses that are crooned, rapped and sung.

Production	8
Lyrics	7
Music	9
Vocals	9
Musicianship	8

SCORE: 8.2

Lauren O'Brien

Contact: campbell@milestonepublicity.com
Web: linktr.ee/laurenalexisobrien
Seeking: Booking
Style: Singer-songwriter, Country

Country is in its renaissance (not a Beyoncé reference), and, in a playing field where everyone's welcome, singer-songwriter Lauren O'Brien makes a strong entrance in familiar folk Americana with her debut EP *In Another Lifetime*. Opener "Weak Days" is solid and simple—soft and gentle in the mix. We believe the song itself "In Another Lifetime," is ambitious, and O'Brien's vocals are too shallow to stand out. "Another Shot" brings something refreshing, more uptempo and bubbly pop. While it is an EP to demonstrate her capabilities, we hope there can be more variety and bigger risks on the full-length, which we look forward to hearing.

Production	8
Lyrics	7
Music	7
Vocals	7
Musicianship	7

SCORE: 7.2

The Arvik

Contact: thearvikmusic@gmail.com
Web: linktr.ee/thearvik
Seeking: Label, Booking
Style: Electronic, Dark-Wave, Synth-Wave

According to Bandcamp, The Arvik is a project that was born in Piacenza, Italy, in 2021, and the "name of the band is a reference to Inuit culture, specifically 'arvik' is the name of the bowhead whale." So Italian, Inuit and, err, whale cultures are colliding here, and it shows. There are definitely European dance music elements on display on a dark yet chill tune like "Bored Soul." "Bounce Me," meanwhile, soaks up some industrial influence—the likes of Nine Inch Nails and Filter spill out of the shadows here. The songs don't stick, but the atmosphere they create is gleefully uncomfortable.

Production	8
Lyrics	7
Music	7
Vocals	7
Musicianship	7

SCORE: 7.2

August to August

Contact: augusttoaugustmusic@gmail.com
Web: linktr.ee/a2amusic
Seeking: Film/TV, Booking
Style: LoFi, Instrumental

There's not a lot of information about August to August available online, besides the fact that the project is based in Spokane, WA. The mystery is nice though; it adds to the overall feel of anonymous atmospherics. The music is very LoFi—pianos loop and beats persist, and the instrumental melodies work their way into all of the places that matter. "Daybreak" feel very much like exactly that—an aural representation of the world slowly coming back to life. "Sunset Hill" is similarly bursting with hope. There's a slow, trance-like build in there, gently working around the loop and creating something beautiful.

Production	8
Lyrics	X
Music	7
Vocals	X
Musicianship	7

SCORE: 7.3

Race to Neptune

Contact: racetoneptuneband@gmail.com
Web: racetoneptune.com
Seeking: Label, Film/TV, Distribution
Style: Alt-Indie, Psych-Rock

There's a strong '90s feel to the psych-rock of Fort Collins, CO band Race to Neptune. The likes of Ride and even Dinosaur Jr. feel like appropriate reference points when listening to "Like a Fairytale," while Brit-pop names such as The Charlatans (U.K.) and Jesus Jones scream out from "Weightless Arrival." None of this is a bad thing. On the contrary, it's been a while since a new band of this type has emerged, from Colorado no less, and really dazzled both musically and with the songwriting. The aforementioned "Weightless Arrival" is the pick of the bunch—dig through the fuzz and there's an insistent melody.

Production	7
Lyrics	8
Music	8
Vocals	7
Musicianship	8

SCORE: 7.6

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES: There is absolutely no charge for a New Music Critique. We critique recordings that have yet to connect with a major label or distributor. To be considered please go to musicconnection.com/get-reviewed. All submissions are randomly selected and reviewed by committee.

GRIEFCAT

The Plus Bus *Los Angeles, CA*

Contact: info@greifcat.com
Web: griefcat.com
Players: Annie Nardolilli, guitar, vocals; Louisa Hall, vocals

Material: Griefcat is a female duo playing beautifully written tunes that poke fun at anything that's not nailed down to the floor. A stripped-down version of their usual full band, the duo took on the audience equipped with only their voices and a guitar, and they beat the audience hands down. The music is country-ish, and is sprinkled with bluesy blues and funky R&B. The lyrics tell a story and all the songs have a comical twist that really catches you off-guard most every time.

Musicianship: The musicianship was excellent. From the get-go, Hall's vocals were outstanding. She came through rich and clear. She is also very confident, loud and proud, and has a charisma about her that is infectious and draws one near. Nardolilli's guitar skills were impressive. She played her guitar like it was second nature to her, and her vocals were only second to Hall's. Together, they made it shine and they knew it.

Performance: The performance was outstanding. Hall and Nardolilli, wearing cute, matching outfits, possess incredible stage-presence. They are very likable and amiable, and the music added another dimension to their persona. The lyrics make fun of every-day things that you and I take for granted. "I Just Want To Get Inside" is about a gal trying to hook-up on a dating site. The rest of the line goes, "I just want to get inside of your bank account."

Summary: Super hilarious lyrics, coupled with very nice music and great vocals is a recipe for success. Griefcat makes fun of everything, but they are also bringing to light serious social issues, such as our "Carbon Footprint." Creativity in abundance, these gals are using all their energy and resources to make you laugh and they do not disappoint. They only have a few select dates left for their tour, and it's only on the East Coast, but if you manage to catch them, you will laugh your butt off. "Cheese, I miss you, Cheese. You bring me to my knees. You give me diarrhea, but I miss you, Cheese." **– *Pierce Brochetti***

TREVOR MCSHANE & THE VERY INCREDIBLE BAND

The Write Off Room *Studio City, CA*

Contact: mikegormley@lapdev.com
Web: trevormcshane.com
Players: Trevor McShane, guitar, vocals; John Barnard, piano; Merrily Weeber, vocals; Dave Winstone, lead and slide guitar; Norm Sancho bass, vocals; George Green, drums; Paul Litteral trumpet; Steve Sadd, saxophone, Craig Kupka, trombone; Colin Kupka, saxophone; Joel Gotler, harmonica

Material: The set consisted of original songs and collaborations with a collective wealth of talented friends and musicians from various genres—blues, gospel, country, a Perry Como cover and a Jack Johnson duet "I Always Look Better." McShane's songs exude hope, love, and make the best of what you got-isms. Examples from the set are: "Nothing We Can't Do," "Love in the Afternoon," "Just Like Romeo and Juliet," and "Robert Johnson's Guitar." McShane's poetry and lyrics are very keen on the human condition.

Musicianship: McShane's solo guitar chops are evident in troubadour fashion on "Old Flame" and "It's A Very Big Word," holding the attention of the 60 or so attendees in the room. Yet every player in this lineup is equivalent to the Yankee's finest. Dave Winstone, filling in for L.A. icon Fred Sokolow, played cutting blues and slide guitar, and Joel Gotler on harmonica drew applause several times. Ditto for the horn section, which included Craig Kupka's son Colin on saxophone. Norm Sancho keeps the band thriving and breathing nicely on bass guitar.

Performance: McShane engages the audience even before he sings with corny jokes to keep the spirits high: "I was going to tell you a boxing joke, but I forgot the punchline," or "Did you hear about the actor who fell through the floorboard—he was going through a stage." McShane is also gracious with his stage as he invited friend and famous collaborator of the Archies, Ron Dante, for a rendition of "Sugar, Sugar" and "Just Getting Started," which had the whole crowd singing along. Merrily Weeber also sang lead vocals on a few poignant tunes, "California" and "Good Morning," keeping the audience close too her.

Summary: This felt like a homecoming show as many folks in the audience have a connection to Trevor McShane, aka prominent entertainment lawyer Neville Johnson. But tonight was a celebration of his music and a message of hope, fun, love, and working with what you got. A gracious and humanitarian spirit permeated The Write Off Room—which incidentally has been beautifully restored from its origins as the first night club in the San Fernando Valley—into a multipurpose theater. **– *Rich Marchetta***

Bowery Ballroom *New York, NY*

Contact: monica@thinkpress.net
Web: buffalotom.com
Players: Bill Janovitz, guitar, vocals; Chris Colbourn, bass, vocals; Tom Maginnis, drums

Material: Buffalo Tom is certainly not new to the music scene. Their brand of alternative rock has kept fans in the fold for several decades. Formed in 1986 by three college friends, Buffalo Tom's bandmates have proven loyalty to each other as well as to their fans. Their material is at times quirky and lyrically cryptic, but musically straightforward. They kicked off the set with "Torch Singer," a jangly guitar-driven number about a love out of reach: "There's some things I've got to say/She won't understand anyway/ There are miles between our hearts/There's salvation in false starts/ I'm forsaken in the end." In a lament, "Summer," though musically up-tempo, speaks to regrets with poetic imagery: "Summer's letters on the ground/ Seven pins, the fall begins/ When the leaves burn summer ends." They also resurrected "Do You In," one of their earlier compositions and a Buffalo Tom classic.

Musicianship: For a group of just three members, the band exudes high energy with signature guitar sounds. Janivitz's scrappy, Dylan-esque "unpolished" sound, works well with the band's overall vibe and delivery. Their user-friendly musical approach favors authenticity over slickness.

Performance: With an uber enthusiastic reception, the band could do no wrong. Their lengthy setlist was followed by six encores which fans reveled in. For a new listener, the amount of material could be overwhelming but diehard fans received the full Buffalo Tom experience with songs covering the spectrum from their decades together.

Summary: To maintain a fan base for as long as this band has, speaks to their ability to connect with their audience. For many, it's the nostalgia of a time in their life, which obviously connects with the band's sound and style. They might want to consider shaving down the set, especially for newcomers to their music as there is much to digest. They have a new album titled *Jump Rope*, which will be released in May. **– *Ellen Woloshin***

The Troubadour *West Hollywood, CA*

Contact: Inge Colsen, Gold Atlas PR-inge@goldatl.as
Web: mtjoyband.com
Players: Matt Quinn, lead singer, guitar; Sam Cooper, guitar, background vocals; Jackie Miclau, keyboard; Michael Byrnes, bass; Sotiris Elioipoulos, drums

Material: Sharing music from *Mt. Joy* (2018), *Rearrange Us* (2020), and *Orange Blood* (2022), along with new tracks "Highway Queen" and "She Wants to Go Dancing," indie rockers Mt. Joy played to an enthusiastic young crowd at the Troubadour for almost two hours ahead of their 50-city North American tour (including their inaugural Hollywood Bowl show). The evening included Tom Petty, Fatboy Slim and Fleetwood Mac cover tunes, showcasing the group's diversity and musical chops, in a setlist that included vulnerable moments, heavy driving funk-rock and southern feel, and energetic pop.

Musicianship: From the fun vibe and energetic, tight drumming on "Evergreen," to great grungy guitar sound, tight rhythms, catchy guitar loops, and stellar breakdowns, this band makes their sound seem easy. Lowkey road trip soundtrack "Strangers" added sing-along scat inserts and a great drop to the guitar and bass section, with a stripped-down vocal outro. "Dirty Love" had beautiful keyboard interludes, highlighting Jackie Miclau's incredible playing (showcased again in Fatboy Slim's "Praise You"), along with Matt Quinn's gorgeous falsetto (appearing again in "Bathroom Light"), and a dramatic cutoff, spotlighting fantastic communication.

Performance: From the line outside the door right up to show time, and a packed house, Mt. Joy gave off a 'boys next door,' vibe, while delivering stellar musicality, accentuated in their stellar use of time and stylistic transitions. "Lemon Tree" shared a delicious bass and kickdrum bounce and build, with a fabulous funky bass solo on audience favorite, "I'm Your Wreck." "Johnson Song" revealed an amazing "decomopositional" ending, with each instrument dropping out one at a time for an extraordinary effect.

Summary: Crowd participation on "Highway Queen," "I'm Your Wreck" and "Astrovan" lit up the room as the group delivered an eclectic and heartfelt mix of Americana rock, and moody, danceable pop. Mt. Joy creates the perfect 'road trip vacation-meets-bestie hangout' sing-along soundtrack. With their standout superpower of creating a cohesive, palpable energy within their performance space, they navigate between head-boppers, heart-wrenching ballads, and party anthems (especially on singable shanty show closer, "Silver Lining"). **– *Andrea Beenham***

The Echo *Los Angeles, CA*

Contact: phoebekatismgmt@gmail.com
Web: miaxally.com
Players: Mia Asano, violin; Ally The Piper, bagpipes; Dominic Marraffa III, drums; Dov Beck-Levine, guitar

Material: Mia X Ally is an all-girl duo that plays all-instrumental, traditional Scottish style tunes. The music is very upbeat, with a no-nonsense, in your face, rock 'n' roll delivery that does not fail. It is traditional Scottish fair, complete with bagpipes, a violin that shreds and a rhythm section that could raise the dead (and they did). Super solid drumming and rhythm guitar set the stage for two wonderful musicians to paint as they pleased.

Musicianship: The musicianship is top-rated. Not too many groups play bagpipes, and then to play them well in this music genre is a pleasant surprise. Outstanding violins were played by Asano, as she added soothing melodies to the music and made you wish you were Irish, and then, she shredded away, playing magnificent solos to her heart's content. The bagpipes were an added enjoyment as Asano plays them beautifully and, together with exceptionally written tunes that were masterfully performed, Mia X Ally took the crowd by storm.

Performance: The performance was great. Mia and Ally are exceptional at their craft. They were also backed up by an exceptional drummer and rhythm guitarist in Marraffa and Levine. Marraffa and Levine were solid in their playing as Mia and Ally took advantage of the faultless timing. They set the backdrop for an outstanding performance. That, coupled with the Echo's lighting and effects, knocked this performance out of the park.

Summary: Notable piper Alasdair Gillies has nothing on these two! A Flying-V violin and bagpipes should be a hint as to what this show was all about. Full on, in-your-face, rockin' rollin' madness (in a very good way). The music takes you back to Ireland to experience Irish folklore in classic rock 'n' roll fashion and Mia X Ally did not dissatisfy. A great show with great music. "May the road rise up to meet you!

– Pierce Brochetti

The 5 Spot *Nashville, TN*

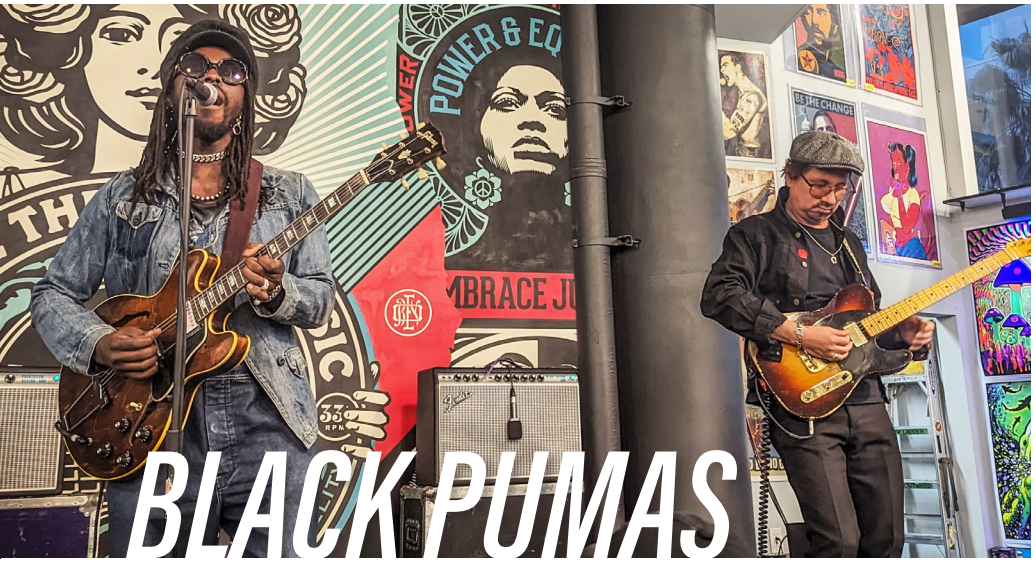
Contact: mitllorrac@aol.com
Web: timcarroll.bandcamp.com
Players: Tim Carroll, vocals, guitar; Cullen Tierney, bass; Justin Amaral, drums

Material: If rock 'n' roll ever died, the news never reached Tim Carroll. The singer-songwriter has been playing since the late '70s, when he first garnered attention with punk band The Gizmos. In the '80s, he joined roots rock act The Blue Chieftains before moving to Nashville in the '90s, whereupon Carroll received plaudits for his alt-country aesthetic. He's released countless albums and had his songs featured on major motion picture soundtracks. Needless to say, he's got piles of tunes which feature perpetually groovy, rip-snorting axe lines and sticky beats. Of all the musical influences one might guess at, Tom Petty seems to be the most obvious.

Musicianship: In terms of technical prowess, this trio is perpetually on point, especially impressive considering they played for two and a half hours straight. Maybe the fact they're enjoying a years-long residency accounts for their abilities. Despite not having powerhouse vocals, Carroll's voice feels familiar and cozy, like a warm pair of fuzzy house slippers on a Saturday morning.

Performance: Sans introduction, Carroll immediately dived into his set, pausing a half an hour in to quip, "By the way, this is our Christmas show. Every time we say 'you,' we mean 'Santa Claus.'" At another point, he reminded the audience of the tip jar and then proceeded to play a song one might interpret as being about that topic. Most of the time, Carroll simply stated the title of the next tune before barreling forward. While he gave props to his backing players, the Indiana native never once introduced himself.

Summary: One cannot help but wonder why Carroll would be performing shows with no cover at this point in his career. Someone with such chops, discography and deftly crafted songs, it seems, should have accumulated a significant following that spends generously to hear him live. Perhaps the reason is that his sound, as fun as it may be, feels rooted in the past. Maybe a dash of the unexpected would help lift his star higher. ***– Andy Kaufmann***



BLACK PUMAS

Amoeba Music *Hollywood, CA*

Contact: olga@btpr.biz
Web: blackpumas.com
Players: Eric Burton, guitar, vocals; Adrian Quesada, guitar

Material: The Black Pumas are an R&B group that play easy-listening music. They ooze hip-hop, R&B and pop at all instances of every song, with cheerful lyrics and soulful grooves that tend to uplift the listener—except for "October 33." They showed off their "heartbreak" writing skills with this one and they made it count. With lyrics like "I got your number, baby," the song is heartfelt and honest, which is the case for all of their tunes.

Musicianship: The musicianship was outstanding. Black Pumas is a band, but on this particular day, only Burton and Quesada came out to play. They have a chemistry that is unmatched. Together, they gel as if they've played together for years, and it rubbed off on the audience. Burton's voice is very good and together with Quesada's fancy guitar work, they relished in the audience's enjoyment of their songs.

Performance: The performance was excellent. Burton and Quesada, both, have great stage-presence. Burton has a great voice, and together with Quesada's decorative guitar-work, they teamed up to give the audience a fantastic show. "Ice Cream" kicked off the set and had the fans groovin' and toe-tapping while "Rock 'n' Roll" had them singing along to a funky, party tune that had everyone dancing in the aisles; and all this with no drums or bass guitar.

Summary: With just a plugged-in, acoustic set for the evening, a drum kit and bass guitar would have only elevated the music to new heights. Catchy, infectious melodies encompassed within groovy chord progressions, made for a wonderful evening of uplifting, inspiring music. All the songs adhere to basic R&B grooves, but Burton puts such melodic vocal twists, and Quesada, such funky guitar riffs, that the songs stand out and resonate on their own. They are currently on tour, literally, all over the place, here in the States, as well as abroad. From here in L.A. to New Orleans, to Memphis to London and back again, don't miss these cats as they'll have you groovin' and shakin' what the good lawd gave ya!

– Pierce Brochetti

ABSENTEES

Lager House *Detroit, MI*

Contact: abs3nt33s@gmail.com
Web: Spotify
Players: Tony Dunn, guitar, bass and vocals; Matt Gawne, guitar, bass and vocals; John Quillen, drums

Material: High energy rock 'n' roll, with a heaping helping of punk is the order of the day for this affably spirited Detroit-based trio. A mix of yet-to-be-released and previously recorded tunes are what they are serving up. No doubt, songs like "Thrash N' Burn," "Fiend Machine" and "Breaking Up" are whetting the appetite for fans anticipating their upcoming third release. It feels fair to deem them, with "classic" status for their clear stylistic references to icons like The Dead Milkmen, Minor Threat and Social Distortion. Yet their sound is tempered by youthful exuberance and an appropriately modern edge.

Musicianship: It is a fairly stripped-down approach that is anchored by Quillen's brash and powerhouse tempos and beats. The unique framework of Dunn and Gawne is such in that they are each adept at stepping into lead and supportive roles. Dunn frets guitar, with a self-assured hand that blends thick power chords and single note lines into a seamless barrage of sound. Switching over to bass his technique is pretty solid and is locked down. The same can be said for Gawne on both fronts. Collectively, their vocals are evenly matched and explode, with raw emotion and a burst of attitude.

Performance: The crowd gathered and was on their feet from the opening downbeat. The Absentees were anything but, as they were very much engaged and present with their fans. Quillen kicked off a number of tunes that bordered on controlled chaos. But, then, that's exactly the point! While the front line shared guitar, bass and vocal duties, the lanky and bearded Dunn visually raised the bar by exhibiting crazed leaps and gyrations across the stage. The frenetic energy emanating from the band was palpable. However, it might have been a tad overdone at times, obscuring the execution of the songs themselves. But, as their set progressed, so did their focus and attention to nuance within the material.

Summary: Absentees are a fun ride and a familiar sound to those that follow the punk and local indie scene. But, while the songs are solid and seem to connect with their fan base, there is nothing distinctive in their stage show that sets them apart from many others of the genre. Perhaps, they need to take some time and develop their visual presentation, and the music will surely follow.

– Eric Harabadian

GUIDE TO

Digital Resources

2024

THE DIY MUSICIAN AND POP STAR ALIKE have had to learn to navigate their careers during the pandemic, which largely meant pivoting to being as online as possible. Despite touring and festivals being in full effect, these shifts are here to stay. Between livestreaming concerts and recording in home studios, and interacting with fans directly on social media platforms, artists are renegotiating their roles by becoming their own marketing team. Every entry in this Guide to Digital Resources & Social Media was nominated by your fellow music-makers, *Music Connection* readers like yourself. Be sure to check out the newly added categories, such as Beat Selling Websites, Music Sales Tracking, Online Instruction, Film/TV Licensing and Monetized Video Posting.

SOCIAL MEDIA & DIGITAL MARKETING TOOLS

BITLY
Web: bitly.com
Services: URL Shortener, Custom Branded URLs, API & Link Management.

CANVA
Web: canva.com
Services: Graphic-design tool website. Design presentations, social media graphics, and more with thousands of beautiful layouts.

CINDERBLOCK
Web: cinderblock.tv
Services: Video streaming app that is built for music videos, concerts, interviews, etc.

CROWDMOUTH
Web: crowdmouth.com
Services: Crowdmouth is a direct-to-fan platform empowering creators to engage, monetize and grow their audiences.

FLYTEVU
Web: flytevu.com
Services: Full-Service entertainment marketing company based in Nashville, TN.

FORTUNES
Web: fortunes.io
Services: Cross-platform music data analytics, career recommendations to increase revenues.

HOOTSUITE
Web: hootsuite.com
Services: Social media marketing and management platform. Helps you keep track and manage your many social network channels. It can enable you to monitor what people are saying about your brand and help you respond instantly.
Fee: Professional - $49/mo.

LINKMY.PHOTOS
Web: linkmy.photos
Services: Instagram photos and captions are currently not linkable. The only place where you can add a link to your website is through the URL in your Instagram bio. Link My Photos has created the destination for your Instagram bio. Your personalized Link My Photos page displays all of your clickable photos to help your followers get to the content and products that you post.
Fee: Free, Shutterbug - $4.99/mo., paparazzi - $9.99/mo

MAGROOVE
Web: artists.magroove.com
Services: Magroove was founded by musicians for musicians, offering a radically simple, transparent, and affordable method for independent artists to seamlessly distribute their music to more than 40 streaming services, engage in direct-to-fan commerce, and access tools for website development.

MAILCHIMP
Web: mailchimp.com
Services: Email marketing tool that allows you to send emails to hundreds or thousands of recipients all at once. It is essentially a tool you can use to create and manage mailing lists and newsletters, as well as automate your email campaigns and collect leads.
Fee: Free, Grow $11, $17/mo, Pro -$299/mo.

NUMBER ONE MUSIC
Web: n1m.com
Services: A music portal dedicated solely to the development and exposure of indie artists/bands

SIMPLY GIGANTIC
Web: simplygigantic.com
Services: PR Agency

SPROUT SOCIAL
866-878-3231
Web: sproutsocial.com
Services: Social media management and optimization platform for brands and agencies of all sizes. Gives you a single hub for social media publishing, analytics and engagement across all of your social profiles.
Fee: Standard - $89/mo, professional $149/mo, Advance $249/mo.

UNSPLASH
Web: unsplash.com
Services: Database of high-resolution, watermark-free images that are free for use.

VENTURE MUSIC
Web: venturemusic.com
Email: info@venturemusic.com
Clients: Universal Music Group, BMG, Red Light Management, Quartz Hill Records, Flobots

VERTIGO
Web: vertigomusic.com
Services: Fans can access artist content on Vertigo from anywhere, no app download required. Artists can further boost streams and sync any content to subscribers' accounts. Independent Artists/Bands.

WEB DESIGN

BANDZOOGLE
Email: support@bandzoogle.com
Web: bandzoogle.com
Services: Unlimited support, free domain name, premium hosting, unlimited bandwidth, mobile-ready themes, music player, SEO tools, tour calendar, EPK's, more.
Fee: Lite – 8.29/mo, Standard - $12.46/mo, Pro - $16.63/mo.

NING
855-233-6436
Web: ning.com
Services: Social integration, custom design, 24/7 support, basic features toolkit, monetization options
Fee: Basic - $25/mo, Performance - $49/ mo, Ultimate - $99/mo.

SQUARESPACE
Email: support.squarespace.com
Web: squarespace.com
Services: Modern templates, adobe image editor, audio collections, social sharing, email campaigns, product merchandising
Fee: Personal - $12/mo., Business - $18/mo., Commerce, $26/$40

WIX
Web: wix.com
Features: Design freedom, SEO, mobile optimization, unlimited fonts, media galleries, custom domain name, social tools, customizable music player, music selling options, stats.
Fee: Free version available, Combo - $14/ mo, Unlimited - $18/mo., Pro - $23/mo., VIP - $39/mo.

WORDPRESS
Web: wordpress.com
Features: Custom domains, mobile friendly, built-in social sharing, in-depth stats, search engine optimized
Fee: Free, Personal - $4/mo, Premium - $8/mo, Business - $25/mo.

LEGAL SERVICES/ADVICE

ARRANGEME
Web: arrangeme.com
Services: Copyright services

AUDOO
Web: audoo.com

AVVO
Web: avvo.com
Services: Ratings, reviews and disciplinary records for lawyers in every state. Get free legal advice, find the right lawyer, and make informed legal decisions.

FREE LEGAL ADVICE
Web: freeadvice.com
Services: Comprehensive legal and insurance advice, articles, answers, videos and news.

LAWCHAMPS
866-653-3017
Web: lawchamps.com
Services: Instantly matches consumers with solo attorneys based on budget. Clients and attorneys can instant message, call & video chat with members only app.

LAWHELP.ORG
Web: lawhelp.org
Services: Created for people living on low incomes and the legal organizations that serve them. LawHelp.org provides referrals to local legal aid and public interest law offices, basic information about legal rights, court forms, self-help information, court information, links to social service agencies, and more in your state.

LEGALZOOM
800-773-0888
Email: support@legalzoom.com
Web: legalzoom.com
Services: Online legal help on business, intellectual property, contracts & agreements, legal advice.

LEGAL SERVICES LINK
844-529-3279
Web: legalserviceslink.com
Services: Anonymously post your legal needs quickly and for free. Lawyers interested in helping you contact you via email. Review the emails and select the best lawyer for you.

MUSIC CONNECTION
Web: musicconnection.com/industry-contacts

NOLO
800-631S-5158
Web: nolo.com
Services: Answers to everyday legal and business questions, lawyer directory

UCLA SCHOOL OF LAW'S MUSIC INDUSTRY CLINIC
Email: mic@law.ucla.edu
Web: law.ucla.edu/academics/clinical-education/clinics/music-industry-clinic
Services: Free 30-minute consultations to individuals who need legal advice relating to their careers in the music industry

VOLUNTEER LAWYERS FOR THE ARTS
212- 319-2787 (Ext. 1)
Email: vlany@vlany.org
Web: vlany.org
Services: VLA provides legal services to low-income artists and all non-profit arts organization in every artistic discipline.

FUNDRAISING/ FINANCIAL MATTERS

ARTISTSHARE
Email: support@artistshare.com
Web: artistshare.com
Services: Operates as a record label and business model for artists which enables them to fund their projects by allowing the general public to directly finance, watch the creative process, and in most cases gain access to extra material from an artist.
Fees: 5% fee on contributions raised in addition to third party credit card processing fees (3-5%).

BEATBREAD
Web: beatbread.com
Services: The pioneering music funding platform that enables artists to access growth capital while maintaining control of their careers and ownership of their music.

CENTTRIP
Web: centtrip.com
Services: Global fintech providing expense management and card payment technology, has launched its platform, app, and card in the United States, to change the way music and entertainment industry manages tour and team expenses

FUNDLY
Web: fundly.com
Services: Crowdfunding site for online fundraising. Raise money online from friends, family, colleagues, donors, and other supporters via email, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google, and social media networks.
Fees: Platform fee of 4.9% per transaction in addition to payment processing fee of 3% + 30 cents per transaction.

GOFUNDME
Web: gofundme.com
Services: For-profit crowdfunding platform that allows people to raise money. 0% platform fee.
Fees: Fees vary based on country. United States is 2.9% + 30 cents per donation.

INDIEGOGO
Web: indiegogo.com
Services: International crowdfunding website. Indiegogo allows people to solicit funds for an idea, charity, or start-up business. Indiegogo charges a 5% fee on contributions.
Fees: 5% of funds raised in addition to processing fee of 3% + 30 cents per transaction. Bank may charge additional fees depending on currency and bank account location.

JACKTRIP FOUNDATION
Web: jacktrip.org
Services: The JackTrip Foundation Equipment Grant supports nonprofit arts, education, and technology organizations, as well as individuals applying through organizations. The funds are for purchase of equipment for network arts projects to further innovation and access in this cultural work.

KICKSTARTER
Web: kickstarter.com
Services: Crowdfunding platform for creative projects. A home for film, music, art, theater, games, comics, design, photography, and more.
Fees: Kickstarter fee of 5% of total funds raised in addition to payment processing fees of 3% + 20 cents per pledge. (Pledges under $10 have a discounted micropledge fee of 5% + 5 cents per pledge)

MUSIC BENEFACTORS
Web: musicbenefactors.com
Services: We work with recording artists, indie labels, publishers, venues, and other music businesses to sell debt and equity securities to investors. The capital raised is used to help fund their businesses.

PATREON
Web: patreon.com
Services: Membership platform that provides business tools for creators to run a subscription content service, with ways for artists to build relationships and provide exclusive experiences to their subscribers, or "patrons."
Fees: 5% of successfully processed fees in addition to an effective payment processing fees that may vary based on transaction amount and method of payment and a fixed fee. These average around 5% and 30 cents per transaction. There are also Payout fees for moving your funds from your Patreon account to your bank account.

PLUMFUND
Web: plumfund.com
Services: Free to fundraisers and donors. There are no transaction fees for organizers or contributors, and no setup fees.
Fees: Third party fee of 2.8% + 30 cents deducted from each transaction.

ROYALTY EXCHANGE
1-800-718-2269
Web: royaltyexchange.com
Services: Online marketplace/auction platform where investors & owners of royalty streams can buy royalties and sell all types of royalties.
Fees: Commission is collected after auction at rate determined prior to listing from sellers. Third party fees for transfers depend on bank account, location, and method of payment for buyers.

SOUND ROYALTIES
Email: info@soundroyalties.com
Web: soundroyalties.com
Services: Offers music professionals non-credit based financing and funding without having to deal with banks or traditional lenders.

MUSIC REVIEW OPINION/FEEDBACK

FLUENCE
Email: contact@fluenceapp.com
Web: curators.com
Services: Makes curators directly accessible to artists/promoters through their platform.

MUSIC CONNECTION (Live Reviews, New Music Critiques)
Email: contactmc@musicconnection.com
Web: musicconnection.com/reviews/get-reviewed
Services: 12 recorded artists and 8 live performances are selected to be reviewed by *Music Connection* staff from artist submissions every month. Unsigned Artists only.

REVERBNATION (CROWD REVIEW)
Email: support@reverbnation.com
Web: reverbnation.com/band-promotion/crowd_review
Services: Artist feedback from targeted sample, data analytics.

SONGCHECKS
Web: songchecks.com
Services: Songchecks is a curated platform for Producers, Mixers, Bands, and Songwriters of all levels and locations to get affordable written feedback on your songs from the world's best music talent.

SONGU.COM
Web: songu.com
Services: Provides multi-level song writing courses developed by award winning songwriters, song feedback, mentoring, one-on-one song coaching, cowriting, unscreened pitching opportunities and more.

TUNECORE (FAN REVIEWS)
646-651-1060
Web: tunecore.com/artist-services
Services: Artist feedback, data analytics

GIG FINDER

AIRGIGS
Email: help@airgigs.com
Web: airgigs.com
Services: Platform for hiring professional session musicians, vocalists and audio engineers online. Songwriters, music producers, bands and creatives can hire talent to enhance their existing productions, or they can produce an entire song from composition to mastering completely online.

GIGMASTERS
866-342-9794
Web: gigmasters.com
Services: Event services booking platform. Hire local musicians, DJs, bands, photographers and speakers for special event.

GIGSALAD
Web: gigsalad.com
Services: Find and book everything from bands, musicians, and DJs to entertainers, speakers and event services.

REVERBNATION
Email: support@reverbnation.com
Web: reverbnation.com
Services: Online platform that provides marketing tools and opportunities for musicians, artists, and bands to manage their careers.
Fee: Free, Basic- $12.95/mo., Premium - $19.95/mo.

SONICBIDS
Email: support@sonicbids.com
Web: sonicbids.com
Services: Connects bands, music promoters and major brands through an online platform. Engage new fans, discover new music and find gigs.
Fee: Sonicbids Basic – Free, EPK Pro - $5.00, Gig-Seeker Pro - $19.99

SOUNDBETTER
888-734-4358
Email: info@soundbetter.com
Web: soundbetter.com

SONG SUBMISSIONS/ PLACEMENTS

ADAPTR
Web: adaptr.com
Services: An all in one platform to easily add hit music to your apps and digital experiences

MUSIC CONNECTION
Web: musicconnection.com

MUSIC GATEWAY
Email: support@musicgateway.com
Web: musicgateway.com
Fee: Influencer - $22/mo., Adventurer - $7.50/year, Game Changer - $37/mo.
Services: Music industry marketplace where you find music industry jobs, receive daily job postings worldwide, start collaborations, send your demo submissions and more.

MUSIC GORILLA
201-796-8742
Email: info@musicgorilla.com
Web: musicgorilla.com
Services: Submit your music to film, TV, songwriting and major label showcase opportunities. Get heard by a wide range of industry pros from music supervisors to internet radio hosts to major label A&R.
Fee: Free to sign up.

MUSIC OPPS
Web: musicopps.com
Services: Music opportunities for independent and unsigned artists

MUSIC XRAY
Email: support@musicxray.com
Web: musicxray.com
Fee: Submission fee set by the Industry Professional, and an additional $10.00 just for the first submission of that song.
Services: Submit your songs to music producers, publishers, supervisors and managers for marketing, music licensing, label roster, publishing, distribution and more. Your track goes directly to the decision makers: no middle-men, no prescreeners, just a direct link between artist and Industry Professional.

SUBMITHUB
Email: jason@submithub.com
Web: submithub.com
Services: Share songs with music bloggers, record labels, radio stations, Spotify playlisters and YouTube or SoundCloud channels.

TAXI
818-222-2464
Web: taxi.com
Services: Helps songwriters, artists, and film/TV composers get their music to record labels, music publishers, music supervisors and music libraries

THAT PITCH
Web: thatpitch.com
Fee: Monthly/$0-$39, Annual/$390
Service: Pitch unlimited music to ads and major motion film.

BEAT SELLING WEBSITES

AIRBIT
Web: airbit.com
Services: Buy, sell and license tracks. Collaborate with other producers. Sell sound kits. Customize your own beat store with the Infinity Store feature.
Fee: Basic Free, Gold-$8.33/mo., Premium-16.66/mo

AUTO-BOUNCE
Web: auto-bounce.com

BEATSTARS
Web: beatstars.com
Fee: Free, Marketplace Plan - $9.99/mo., Pro Page Plan - $19.99/mo.
Services: Post, sell and buy beats online. Create your own custom beat selling website with themes and domain with the Pro Page plan. Earn ad revenue when people stream your music on SoundCloud and Audiomack.

BOPPER
Web: boppermusic.com
Services: Ad music licensing platform, Bopper, has come to an agreement with all of the rights holders it represents to pre-clear tracks for use in brand content productions on Tik Tok, YouTube, Instagram and Twitch. A safe and easy way for brands to license music from independent recording artists for immediate use in digital advertising.

BRIDGER
Web: bridgemusic.io
Services: Bring independent songwriters towards copyright by offering them an innovative and easy solution to collect their royalties generated on digital platforms.

SOUNDCLICK
Email: support@soundclick.com
Web: soundclick.com
Services: Stream, download, buy and sell beats on a social media platform that includes photo albums, video uploads, blogs and message boards.

TRAKTRAIN
Web: traktrain.com
Services: Invitation only platform to sell, buy and listen to instrumentals. Paid creative assistance and track mixing available.

SONG COMPETITIONS

GREAT AMERICAN SONG CONTEST
Email: info@greatamericansong.com
Web: greatamericansong.com
Summary: Open to songwriters, lyricists & music composers worldwide. This annual event is designed for amateur and semi-pro songwriters only. Individuals who earn over $10,000 annually from song publishing royalties are not eligible.
Prizes: Grand Prize Winner receives $1,000 cash in addition to a free membership to TAXI Independent A&R, free one-year Platinum Membership to SongU.com and more.
Fee: $35 per song

INTERNATIONAL SONGWRITING COMPETITION
615-251-4441
Web: songwritingcompetition.com
Summary: Annual song contest that provides opportunity for both aspiring and established songwriters to have their songs heard in a professional, international arena. 71 winners will share in the cash and prizes.
Categories: AAA (Adult Album Alternative), AC (Adult Contemporary), Americana, Blues, Children's Music, Christian, Comedy/Novelty, Country, EDM (Electronic Dance Music), Folk/Singer-Songwriter, Instrumental, Jazz, Latin Music, Lyrics Only, Music Video, Performance, Pop/Top 40, R&B/Hip-Hop, Rock, Teen, Unpublished, Unsigned Only, and World Music.
Fee: $25.00 per song or category

JOHN LENNON SONGWRITING CONTEST
888-884-5572
Email: info@jlsc.com
Web: jlsc.com/about.php
Summary: The JLSC is open year-round and features two Sessions – with 72 Finalists, 24 Grand Prize Winners, 12 Lennon Award Winners and 1 "Song of the Year." The Contest is open to amateur and professional songwriters who submit entries in any one of 12 categories.
Fee: $30.00 per song

LEE RITENOUR'S SIX STRING COMPETITION
Email: ritsguitar@aol.com
Web: sixstringtheory.com
Summary: The Six String Theory Competition, hosted by Grammy-winning guitarist and producer, Lee Ritenour, is a biennial competition that accepts performer applications for guitar, bass, piano/keyboards and drums, and offers winners performance opportunities and scholarships, as well as prizes from sponsors.

MUSIC CITY SONGSTAR
Email: mcss@musiccitysongstar.com
Web: musiccitysongstar.com
Summary: A songwriting competition for up-and-coming writers and musicians in all genres.
Prizes: The Grand Prize winner receives money, an invitation to perform their song at an exclusive event and instruments.

MUSIC CONNECTION
Web: musicconnection.com

NASHVILLE SONGWRITERS
1710 Roy Acuff Pl
Nashville, TN 37203
800-321-6008

Email: reception@nashvillesongwriters.com
Web: nashvillesongwriters.com

SKIO MUSIC
Web: skiomusic.com
Summary: Download free stems and win official releases, collabs, plugins and more

SPLICE
Web: splice.com
Fee: Must sign up to Splice Sound for $7.99/mo.
Summary: Remix contests. Win official releases, collabs, plugins and more.

UNSIGNED ONLY MUSIC COMPETITION
615-251-4441
Email: info@unsignedonly.com
Web: unsignedonly.com
Summary: Unsigned Only is designed for solo artists, bands, and singers all over the world who are looking for exposure, recognition, and a chance to be noticed by industry professionals. Open to all artists who are unsigned to a major record label.
Prizes: Grand Prizes $20,000, mastering services, music distribution and more.
Fee: $35 per song

USA SONGWRITING COMPETITION
Web: songwriting.net
Summary: Open to all amateur and professional songwriters and anyone regardless of nationality or origin.
Prizes: Winning songs receive radio airplay. Overall Grand Prize winner will receive $50,000 worth of cash, merchandise and services. Overall 2nd Prize winner will receive $9,000 worth of merchandise. Overall 3rd Prize winner will receive $6,500 worth of merchandise.
Categories: Songwriters can enter in 15 different song categories such as: Pop, Rock/Alt, Folk, R&B, Hip-Hop, Jazz, Instrumental, etc.
Fee: $35.00 per song

ON THE ROAD: LODGING

AIRBNB
415-800-5959, 855-424-7262
Web: airbnb.com
Services: Find hosts with extra rooms, entire homes and unique accommodations.

COUCH SURFING
Email: support@couchsurfing.com
Web: couchsurfing.com
Services: Arrange homestays, offer lodging and hospitality

HOTEL TONIGHT
Email: help@hoteltonight.com
Web: hoteltonight.com
Services: Last minute hotel deals, discounted room rates

INDIE ON THE MOVE
Email: info@indieonthemove.com
Web: indieonthemove.com
Services: Show & tour booking, Music Venues Database, QuickPitch Emailing, College & University Show Booking Database, Bands Directory, Show Availabilities, Classifieds
Fee: Free, Premium - $9.99/mo.

PRICELINE
877-477-5807
Web: priceline.com
Services: Discount rates for travel-related purchases including airline tickets, hotel stays, cars, cruises

ARTIST COLLABORATIONS

AIRTABLE
Web: airtable.com
Services: Shared database/spreadsheet
Fee: Free or paid membership ($10/mo, $24/mo.).

AUDDLY
Email: info@auddly.com
Web: auddly.com
Services: Allows music creators to collect their song data and make it accessible for the business side, in order to secure transparent and correct credits and payments for everyone involved.

AUDIOBRIDGE
Web: audiobridgeapp.com
Services: Mobile recording studio, tool for mobile music collaboration. Communicate directly with your collaborators with dedicated chat-rooms for every session. Keep track of your entire history of edits in one place with both real-time and delayed collaboration.

AVID
Web: avid.com
Services: Provides information on alldigital solutions for capturing, creating, editing and distributing digital media.

BANDHUG
Web: bandhug.com
Services: Bandhug is an international music platform that fosters collaboration between musicians and the globe.

BANDLAB
Email: hello@bandlab.com
Web: bandlab.com
Services: Social media network for musicians and fans with unlimited cloud based storage.

BANDMIX
877-569-6118
Web: bandmix.com
Services: Online classified network for connecting local musicians and bands.
Fee: Free or premier membership $12.95/$17.90mo

BEATSTARS
Web: beatstars.com
Services: Digital production marketplace that allows music producers to license and sell beats and give away free beats.
Fee: Free or Unlimited for $9.99/$19.99mo

BLEND
Web: blend.io
Services: Makes the process of producing music interactive. The social platform helps music producers share music projects in source format, perfect for remixing, collaborating, learning from, and gathering feedback from others in the global community.

DOWNWRITE
Web: downwrite.com
Services: Downwrite is a platform for the co-creation of music for fans and artists. It allows fans to bring a personal experience, idea, or occasion into the creative realm of an artist, who through their unique talent, transforms the shared experience into music.

DROOBLE
Email: team@drooble.com
Web: drooble.com
Services: Social media network for musicians with promotional features, also allows users to submit reviews of other users music for payment.

FRETTIE
Web: frettie.com
Services: Connect with other songwriters from around the globe. Frettie is a valuable songwriting community made up of students, professionals and hit songwriters who are all eager to learn, discover, give feedback and connect with each other.

INTROBOT
Web: introbot.co
Services: App for musicians, filmmakers, actors, models, photographers, writers, dancers, artists, designers, and people with ideas, to collaborate with people from around the world who have the skills to realize their creative idea.

KOMPOZ
Web: kompoz.com/music
Services: Social network platform for musicians, to share, collaborate, distribute music and crowdsource production/ performers
Fee: Free or premier membership ($5/ mo., $10/ mo., $20/mo.).

LEDO
Web: ledomusic.is
Services: A 'Collab-House' platform for music makers and content creators to connect and reach new audiences.

METAPOP
Email: support@metapop.com
Web: metapop.com
Services: Upload and share tracks, join communities, and enter competitions.

MUSIC LAUNCH HUB
Web: musiclaunchhub.com
Services: Global music network where working musicians and the next wave of music professionals, come together to better navigate their future in music.

MUSICIAN'S CONTACT
818-888-7879
Email: info@musicianscontact.com
Web: musicianscontact.com
Services: Connecting musicians and bands together for over 45 years, from club and casual groups, to traveling bands, to concert and recording acts.

MUSIVERSAL
Web: musiversal.com
Fee: $49/mo, $490/yearly
Services: , vocalists, producers, and audio engineers.

OFFTOP
Web: offtop.co
Services: Mobile recording studio to rap and sing over beats. Explore library of fresh instrumentals, record freestyle or written verses, and share your rap or song with the world.

PROCOLLABS
Web: procollabs.com
Services: online music collaboration service that gives you access to experienced and talented songwriters, musicians, audio engineers, and music producers from all around the world.
Fee: Free or premier membership ($20/mo., $50/mo., $95/mo.).

SLACK
Web: slack.com
Services: Collaborative hub for work colleagues with features such as messaging, file sharing, screen sharing, searchable history, and integration with other filesharing/messenger apps. Organizes conversations between work colleagues into streamlined layout.
Fee: Paid membership ($6.67/mo., $12.50/mo.).

SONGSALIVE!
Web: songsalive.org
Services: Largest global songwriters squad. A non-profit organization supporting, promoting and educating songwriters and composers worldwide.

SONGSPACE
Web: songspace.com
Services: Helps music creators and publishers collaborate, pitch, track and share song projects and playlists.
Fee: Creator - $8/mo., Business - $15/ mo.- Plus - $28/mo

SONGTOWN
Web: songtown.com
Services: A virtual music "town" where creative people gather to be encouraged, educated and inspired. Writers of all genres, from all over the world come to SongTown to find other creative cowriters, to learn how to improve their craft from #1 hit songwriters and publishers, and to be mentored by successful music industry pros.
Fee: Platinum Annual Plan $197 per year, Diamond Fast Track $649 per year, monthly membership for $24.99/mo.

SONGWRITER LINK
Web: songwriterlink.com
Services: Songwriting collaboration website that makes finding the perfect co-writer faster than before. It's the only website that uses matching engine technology—the same kind that dating websites use—to help find you exactly the type of songwriters you're looking for.

SOUNDATION
Web: soundation.com
Services: This feature unlocks many unique opportunities for Plugin manufacturers and sample pack and beat marketplaces to have a slick way of showcasing their products and allow site visitors to try them out. Producers and other creators can engage their audience in a new way by letting them actively listen to or remix their creations.

SOUNDSTORMING
Web: soundstorming.com
Services: Helps musicians to connect, collaborate and promote themselves using their musical ideas, riffs and fragments.

SOUNDTRAP
Web: soundtrap.com
Services: Online recording studio/DAW with collaborative features, plugins/ drumtracks, autotune, other audio engineering features. Also educational features
Fee: (Free, $7.99/mo., $11.99/mo., $13.99).

SPLICE
Web: splice.com
Services: Musicians use Splice to find sounds, get gear, enter contests, discover projects and connect with one another.

STUDIOTRAXX
Web: studiotraxx.com
Services: Provides instant access to a vast global network of musicians-for-hire who are ready to work and collaborate via the web. Private collaboration areas are also available to those who don't need to find and hire musicians but simply need an efficient way to manage files across partners.

TULLY
Web: tullyapp.com
Services: Recording artists and songwriters can play, write, and record song ideas all within one application. Artists can share their projects with their engineer before studio sessions, allowing instant access to the audio file, lyric sheet, and recording ideas. All your files are organized and stored to the cloud, keeping all your creative work safe in one location.

TUNEBLADES
Web: tuneblades.com
Services: Empowers both professional and non-professionals to quickly resize and remix songs to match any duration, remove vocals from songs, and stream indefinitely for live presentations or programs.

VAMPR
Email: support@vampr.me
Web: vampr.me
Services: App that helps you discover, connect and collaborate with fellow musicians, the music industry and music lovers alike.

VOCALIZR
Web: vocalizr.com
Services: Created to connect professional singers and producers world-wide. Community of producers looking for talent.
Fee: Free or Pro Membership ($9/mo).

MUSIC SALES TRACKING

CHARTMETRIC
Web: chartmetric.io
Services: Music data analytics company. They combine hundreds of thousands of real-time data points across iTunes, Spotify, Youtube, Google, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram in order to make sense of the increasingly complex landscape of the music industry.

CRYPTO.COM
Web: crypto.com
Services: Cryptocurrency tracking app, and has recently expanded to covering and paying NFTs for artists and audiences.

NEXT BIG SOUND
Web: nextbigsound.com
Services: Provides online music analytics and insights, tracking hundreds of thousands of artists around the world. As part of Pandora, they deliver powerful analytics tools used by music makers, labels and marketers looking for data and insights about artists and their fans.

MAYKI
Web: mayk.it/#stations
Virtual studio where you can create music on demand with our team of producers.

RCRDSHP STUDIO
Web: app.rcrdshp.com
Email: newsletter@rcrdshp.com
Services: A curated digital collectibles platform, built by and for the electronic music industry, and validated by technologies like the blockchain and non-fungible tokens.

SONGTRUST
Web: songtrust.com
Services: World's largest global royalty collection service, Songtrust streamlines the music publishing administration of 1,000,000+ songs.

SOUNDCHARTS
Web: soundcharts.com
Services: A full-stack solution (database, desktop, mobile apps & API) that brings together real-time and historical music consumption data, (social, charts, playlist, airplay monitoring) to improve project management, reporting and artist scouting.

WIO PRO
Web: wiopro.com
Services: empowers entertainment stakeholders to track the airing of movies and television episodes, vital information that drives the payment of guild residuals, composer royalties and profit participations.

ONLINE INSTRUCTION

ARI'S TAKE ACADEMY
Web: aristakeacademy.com
Services: Multiple individual courses available, created by indie musician and music business author Ari Herstand. Courses range from topics such as managing tours to streaming and social media growth.

BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC
Web: berklee.edu
Services: Multiple online degree and certificate programs. Interactive 12-week courses. World-renowned faculty and classmates.

HIFI LABS
Web: hifilabs.co
Services: HIFI Labs' Web3 Artist Cohort is a free virtual three-week immersive program that helps connect emerging musicians with the resources they need to further develop and launch their next music project using Web3 tools.

LESSONS.COM
Web: lessons.com

MELOPHY
Web: melophy.com
Services: Melophy is a teaching site by artists for artists to organize calendars, live lesson streams to individual and groups of students, and schedule virtual performances.

MUSICIANS INSTITUTE
Web: mi.edu/programs/mi-online
Services: Access to acclaimed curriculum and supportive interactive course content. Certificates in guitar performance and artist/entrepreneur/production and Associate degrees in guitar performance and music business.

MUSIC CREDITS DATABASES

DISCOGS
Web: discogs.com
Services: Discover new music. Track your collection. Contribute to the database.

GENIUS
Web: genius.com
Services: Wide collection of song lyrics and musical knowledge.

MUSICBRAINZ
Web: musicbrainz.org
Services: Open music encyclopedia that collects music metadata and makes it available to the public. MusicBrainz captures information about artists, their recorded works, and the relationships between them.

TOUR DATES CALENDAR

BANDSINTOWN
Email: support@bandsintown.com
Web: bandsintown.com
Services: Music website billed as a "platform where artists and fans connect." The site allows users to receive notifications about tours and bands playing in the user's area. It also has tools for artists to manage tour dates.

LYTE
Web: lyte.com/events
Services: Lyte is a platform that enables event organizers, venues and artists to enhance their ticketing, ensure shows are full and keep fans happy. Lyte provides a safe, official reservation system and allows fans to return their tickets to the official point of purchase for a fair price.

MANDOLIN
Web: mandolin.com
Services: Keeps fans up to date with artists, and tours, merch, etc.

SONGKICK
Web: songkick.com
Services: Provides concert discovery services and ticket sales for live music events.

LIVE STREAMING

DREAMSTAGE
Email: support@dreamstage.live
Web: dreamstage.live
Services: A streaming platform where musicians of all genres perform and interact with fans worldwide.

STAGEIT
Web: stageit.com
Services: Artists perform live, online shows from their laptop that are never recorded or archived. Fans are encouraged to ask the artist questions, request songs, and even chat with other fans during the show. Virtual tip jar available on every show.

TWITCH
Web: twitch.tv
Services: Site primarily focuses on video game live streaming, including broadcasts of eSports competitions, in addition to music broadcasts, creative content, and more recently, "in real life" streams. Content on the site can be viewed either live or via video on demand.

YOUKNOW
Web: younow.com
Services: Discover talented broadcasters, watch live streams and video chat live with people from around the world.

T-SHIRTS & MORE: MERCH & MANUFACTURING

9 CAFEPRESS
877-809-1659
Web: cafepress.com
Services: Create and sell your personalized designs on t-shirts, bags, mugs, posters and many more unique gifts.

AKA
Web: galleryaka.com
Services: AKA is an independently owned & operated retail boutique and custom printing company based in San Diego, California.

BANDS ON A BUDGET
866-471-3868
Web: bandsonabudget.com
Services: Prints custom merchandise for all types of businesses and brands, with a large majority of its customers being up-and-coming musicians. With products varying from shirts to stickers, banners to tour posters, BandsonaBudget.com can help you cover all of your bases in one shot.

BIG CARTEL
Web: bigcartel.com
Services: Build a unique online store, sell your work, and run a creative business. Perfect for clothing designers, bands, jewelry makers, crafters, and other artists.

CUSTOM INK
800-293-4232
Web: customink.com
Services: American-based online retail company that makes custom apparel.

DISC MAKERS
Email: info@discmakers.com
Web: discmakers.com
Services: Disc Makers is the world's largest CD, DVD, and Blu-ray manufacturer for independent musicians, filmmakers, and businesses. They offer duplication, replication, printing, graphic design, audio mastering, DVD authoring, worldwide distribution and more.

FIVERR
Web: fiverr.com
Services: Online marketplace for freelance services including digital marketing, graphic design, music, audio and more.

KILLERMERCH.COM
Web: killermerch.com
Services: Full-service branding agency, global merchandising, product development

MERCH CAT
Email: info@merchcat.com
Web: merchcat.com
Services: Merch sales, inventory management, track payments and get real-time reports.

MERCH.LY
866-522-4012
Web: merchly.com
Services: Custom t-shirts, hoodies, bags and more, customized with your band logo or design.

PRINTFUL
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Email: support@printful.com
Web: printful.com
Services: On-Demand order fulfillment and warehousing service. Products include: clothing, accessories, and home & living items for online businesses. It's free to set up, with no monthly fees or minimum order.

REDBUBBLE
Web: redbubble.com
Services: Online marketplace to print on-demand products based on user submitted artwork.

RUSHORDERTEES
2727 Commerce Way
Philadelphia, PA 19154
Web: rushordertees.com
Email: sales@rushordertees.com
Services: Screen printing, embroidery, delivery

SHOPIFY
Web: shopify.com
Services: Shopify is a commerce platform that allows anyone to easily sell products. Shopify offers a professional online storefront, a payment solution to accept credit cards, and the Shopify POS application to power retail sales.
Fee: Basic Shopify - $29/mo., Shopify - $79 /mo., Advanced Shopify - $299/mo.

SONGLORIOUS
Services: Employs a stable of hundreds of musicians who create customized songs for anniversaries, birthdays, and yes marriage proposals. Customers simply fill in details for their song, choose a genre song length and in four days-time a certified musician will send back a song. Cost for song starts at $90.

SPREADSHOP
800-381-0815
Email: help@spreadshop.com
Web: spreadshop.com
Services: Create and sell custom merchandise on your own online shop for free.

SQUARE
Web: squareup.com/us/en
Services: Financial services, merchant services aggregator, and mobile payment company
Fee: Charges 2.75% per swipe.

STICKER MULE
Web: stickermule.com
Services: Custom stickers, labels, magnets & more. Get free proofs, free shipping, 4-day turnaround & 24/7 customer support

TEEPUBLIC
Web: teepublic.com
Email: help@teepublic.com
Services: Largest marketplace for independent creators to sell their work on high-quality merch

VISTAPRINT
866-614-8002
Web: vistaprint.com
Services: Design and order custom printed marketing materials, signage, t-shirts, hats, pens

ZAZZLE
Web: zazzle.com
Services: Allows designers and customers to create their own products with independent manufacturers, as well as use images from participating companies.

MUSIC DISTRIBUTION & FILM/TV LICENSING

AIMI
Web: aimi.fm/about
Services: World-class artists have collaborated with the platform to present original compositions and Experiences, oftentimes they provide an album's length of material. Aimi's unique AI proactively chooses the right pieces of audio to play at the right moments, constantly rearranging and repurposing segments, to generate brand new presentations of these artists' material.

AMUSE
Email: support@amuse.io
Web: amuse.io
Services: Strategic planning, marketing, financing, branding and PR, 50/50 profit.

AWAL
Email: info@awal.com
Web: awal.com
Services: Global distribution, marketing and release management, A&R, funding, playlist promotion, radio & PR, YouTube monetization, and music data and insights through the AWAL App.

BEATBREAD
Web: beatbread.com

BEATCHAIN
Email: enquiries@beatchain.com
Web: beatchain.com
Fee: Free sign-up, $14.99/mo., $19.00/mo.
Services: distribution, insights, marketing

CD BABY
800-289-6923
Web: cdbaby.com
Services: Digital distribution, sync licensing, publishing administration, CD/vinyl sales

DISTROKID
Email: support@distrokid.com
Web: distrokid.com
Services: Distribute cover songs legally, get paid when other people use your music on YouTube, unlimited backups, instant Spotify verified checkmark, manage your Apple Music page, get your credits & lyrics into stores, Spotify pre-save.

DITTO MUSIC
Web: dittomusic.com
Services: Distribution service offers unlimited releases to all major online stores on an annual subscription basis. Non-exclusive deals with artists keeping 100% of their royalty earnings. Record label services including PR, social media and playlist pitching to independent artists.

FWAYGO
Web: fwaygo.com
Services: Built by music artists and powered by fans, the platform provides a first-of-its-kind music discovery experience for consumers as well as a disruptive business model enabling undiscovered artists to increase both their exposure and their earnings by avoiding exploitative music ownership, royalty and streaming revenue policies.

LANDR
Email: contact@landr.com
Web: landr.com
Services: AL mastering, collaboration workflows, artist-friendly distribution, promotion tools, free samples, stats.
Fee: $24.99/mo/$207yr/$149.99yr (billed upfront)

OCTIIVE
Email: support@mondotunes.com
Web: octiive.com
Services: Distribution, marketing, mastering, licensing opportunities.

ONERPM
Email: support@onerpm.com
Web: onerpm.com
Services: Music distribution, marketing, business intelligence, rights mgmt. & publishing, etc.

QOBUZ
Web: qobuz.com
Services: Offers high-quality sound and unlimited listening, anytime, everywhere.

REPOSTEXCHANGE
Web: repostexchange.com
Services: Offers SoundCloud monetization, content protection, and upgraded profile features to musicians and podcasters on the platform.

REVELATOR
Web: revelator.com
Services: State of the art full-stack copyright management platform for independent artists, labels, and distributors to distribute to music digital platforms, manage revenue reporting.

REVERBNATION
Email: support@reverbnation.com
Web: reverbnation.com
Services: Opportunities, digital distribution, site builder, fan reach, crowd review, gig finder, sell direct, electronic press kits.

RIGHTSHOLDER.IO
Web: rightsholder.io
Services: A simple music rights search engine designed with music licensing & synchronization professionals in mind.

SONGTRADR
424-744-8190
Email: support@songtradr.com
Web: songtradr.com
Services: Free sign-up, online music licensing, free submission to music licensing opportunities, unlimited music storage.

SYMPHONIC DISTRIBUTION
813-907-3128
Web: symphonic.com
Services: Video distribution, publishing administration, neighboring rights, marketing, video marketing, sync licensing, web and graphic design, YouTube "website monetization" and SoundCloud monetization.

SYNC SONGWRITER
Web: syncsongwriter.com
Services: Selectively licenses music with licensing agent. The goal of the site is to teach you how to get your songs into TV & film.

THE ORCHARD
Email: communications@theorchard.com
Web: theorchard.com
Services: distribution, marketing, data analytics, performance rights, accounting

TUNECORE
Web: tunecore.com
Services: Vinyl pressing and distribution, physical copies of your music, guaranteed plays on services like Deezer and 8track, engagement stats, custom artist website using designs tailored for musicians

UNITEDMASTERS
Email: info@unitedmasters.com
Web: unitedmasters.com
Services: Distribution, marketing, analytics
Fee: $100 monthly payment made through paypal, UnitedMasters keeps 50% of royalties.

MONETIZED VIDEO POSTING

DROPP TV
Web: dropp.tv
Email: support@dropp.tv
Services: Dropp TV unleashes the power of the creator through an innovative blend of art, technology and e-commerce creating a new mode of digital interaction.

SONGFLUENCER
Web: songfluencer.com
Email: info@songfluencer.com
Services: Strategically pairs songs, artist, and brands with key tastemaker influencers on music-forward social media platforms.

SPARS.com
The Recording Connection

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Finding Your Voice In Your Music

How do you get your art to connect with others? What is your unique artistic perspective and how do you find your voice? Think about your favorite artist, whether they're musicians, painters, writers etc.... Has the subject matter of the art they've produced been a totally new concept to you? Probably not. They've only taken something familiar and perhaps, helped you see it from a different perspective. The driving force behind their art is their voice and it takes practice and honesty to arrive there. Once you start developing your unique perspective, it's important to recognize it and lean into it. But how do you get there? The simple answer for me is practice and honesty. Below are a few tips from me to you.

Cover Songs
When you're starting to write your own songs don't be afraid to cover your favorite songs. When you do this, you should also analyze the lyrics, melody and chord structures. Covering songs you aren't that familiar with is also a great exercise. Because you don't know them as well as the songs you cover by your heroes, there is more room for interpretation.

Find Your Vocal Range
If you're trying to cover a song, but it's not in your range, practice transposing songs to where you can sing them in a comfortable range for your voice. Alternatively, you can mess around with keeping the songs in the same key, but changing the melody to fit your range. A huge part of your voice is YOUR VOICE and interpreting other people's songs in that voice is great practice. Check out artists who have interpreted others' songs in their own way. I will always love you, by Dolly Parton, sung by Whitney Houston is a good example, or "Hurt" by Nine Inch Nails; sung by Johnny Cash.

Write to the Changes
If you come across a sequence of chords that really stands out to you, write a song to those chords. You can always rearrange the chords, or change the harmonic rhythm, meaning where the chords are placed in relation to the beat.

Write to Lyrics
As a song writing exercise, I wrote solely to the lyrics of Bonnie Raitt's song, Guilty, writing new chords and melody without ever hearing the song before. When I finally listened to her original version and compared it to my version, I could see that mine was clearly in my voice and approach.

This exercise can show you a lot of what your musical style is. Since you have no reference point to what the original song sounds like, you're completely free to come up with your own sound based on the lyrics and you might come up with an interesting result.

Don't put your songs on a pedestal – Write A LOT of songs and don't get too stuck in the weeds when working on them. Sure... If you have a solid idea you need to work on, by all means, take the time to hammer it out. But don't keep tweaking the same group of songs over and over again, because you would have written ten more songs by that time and there will most likely be bits from those other songs you were tweaking in the new one's – they just work better now.

Stand Your Ground
When collaborating with an engineer, producer, or musicians you do need to be flexible, however there's a difference between being flexible and sacrificing your idea. This can be hard at first because you may be working in the studio with someone who has more experience than you, but be sure to speak up for what you want because at the end of the day, it's your song and you have to live with it.

Be Honest
Say what you feel in your lyrics. You can always edit later, but don't edit yourself in the songwriting process. Also, be honest with yourself. What are you good at? Don't shy away from the thing that is unique to your personality. Remember, it's the way that artist see the world that makes them unique. Find out what it is that makes you, you and lean into it!

Your music may not sound like the music you listen to and that's okay – I have heard some people at my shows say that my sound reminds them of Radiohead and after all... they are my favorite band, but I think in the beginning I tried to copy their sound a little too much and now, even though you may still be able to hear the influence, I've dropped hearing Thom York in my head when writing songs and leaned into my own voice and a vocal range that is comfortable for me. I also love Mac Miller, Idles, Nirvana and Audioslave, but I don't sound like them. What comes out of you is what comes out and be careful not to shy away from that because you don't sound similar genre wise to that of your idols.

Live your Llife
I saw Johnny Cash say in an interview that he needs to "Fill up, before he pours out." Even when you don't feel inspired you are always collecting experiences and ideas and they are uniquely your own. You need to collect those ideas and live life outside of music in order to "fill up" with life experience so you have something to talk about. And, make sure that when a little idea comes whether it's a lyric, melody, or song title, that you write it down or record it.

Keep Learning
I don't believe one day you arrive at having found your voice, you just figure out what you want to say and how you want to say it, but you should always be in pursuit of "finding your voice". Always be curious and playful because that's when the best music is made.

Chicago-based vocalist, multi-instrumentalist, and producer **CHNNLL, a.k.a. Chris Davidson**, brings live instrumentation and soundscapes to his brand of alternative pop. Born in Manhattan and raised in Stamford, CT, Davidson initially excelled on the drums and studied jazz at The New School, where he explored guitar, piano and songwriting. CHNNLL's most recent release from this year is Little Stranger EP, streaming now.

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